MARCH, 1955 35¢

Universe

SCIENCE FICTION

MISTRESS OF VIRIDIS — margaret st. clair

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MARCH 1955
Issue No. 10

UNIVERSE
SCIENCE FICTION

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EDITORS:

RAY PALMER
BEA MAHAFFEY

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I'M BEA

I am the editor of this magazine. I have the job of picking out the stories, polishing them up, and getting the illustrations for them, doing the actual work of producing the magazine for the printer. It isn't an easy job, but I love my work. I've been with Ray for five years now; first with OTHER WORLDS, then switching to SCIENCE STORIES and UNIVERSE, and sometimes helping on MYSTIC. It's fascinating work, and we have so many plans to give you the best science fiction magazine possible. As part of those plans

WE WANT TO MAKE

Effective with the next issue, we are going to change the title of UNIVERSE. Our reason for this is many-fold, but primarily it is because we've received so many letters from our readers saying that UNIVERSE is becoming more and more like the old OTHER WORLDS with which we began our joint careers. As for myself, I've always been in love with that title, and therefore it is easy to carry the inference to a logical conclusion. So, beginning with our May issue

THIS IS OUR NEW TITLE:

OTHER WORLDS

I'M RAY

I've been publishing, editing, or writing science fiction for 28 years. I began with Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*, which I later edited for nearly twelve years, along with *Fantastic Adventures*. In 1949 I started OTHER WORLDS, a title I had long kept "under my hat," but due to strange circumstances, the title evolved through SCIENCE STORIES and UNIVERSE. Now I've decided to go back to my favorite title. So, beginning with the next issue, which will be dated May 1955, we will have the same old magazine with another name.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

You've become accustomed to a very high standard of science fiction in UNIVERSE. That policy will not be changed. We have stories coming up you'll remember for a long time to come for their fine qualities. Such authors as Edmond Hamilton (what a writer!), and our new discoveries, Evelyn Martin and M. J. Nuttall. They're terrific! So don't forget to remember: when March 15th rolls around, look for the May issue.

ASK YOUR NEWSDEALER FOR:

OTHER WORLDS

IT is with a great deal of glee that we announce that this issue is the death of UNIVERSE. We're sick and tired of pretending that this is a new magazine, when all the time we know it's just old OTHER WORLDS with a false face. So, effective with the very next issue, the title of your favorite magazine is going to be OTHER WORLDS *Science Stories*, just as it used to be. No changes at all—just the return to the old title.

Maybe we'd better give you a little history to go with this. We have gained some reputation during the past couple of years as a rapid-change artist. We did do a lot of changing, but all of it was necessary. First, we went monthly on OTHER WORLDS just at the time the market broke. It broke us too—so badly we had to drop the magazine out of the print shop where it was then being printed. We just couldn't afford to pay umpteen million dollars for printing any more. And we had a contract that had three years to run. What to do? Nothing. We had to scuttle the magazine.

But then we immediately brought out a new magazine, calling it SCIENCE STORIES—which wasn't such a far cry from OTHER WORLDS, because originally our full title was OTHER WORLDS *Science Stories*. But it was a *new* title, and we could go to a cheaper printer with it. Then, because we couldn't afford a monthly schedule, and sales were so bad anyway, we had to bring it out every other month. This didn't exactly please us, so we got hold of UNIVERSE, which had foundered under its original publishers who were glad to get rid of it. We alternated the two magazines, and thus had a monthly magazine (in effect). We lost lots of money, but we weathered the storm, and having ditched

(*Continued on page* 102)

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MISTRESS OF VIRIDIS

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CHAPTER I

THE penetrating pale green daylight of Viridis had been shut away behind long curtains, and the big room was golden in the glow of pendant ceiling lights. Except for the soft whirr and click of the ibim as it sorted the dossier cards, there was no noise.

The ibim, though not a new model, was fast. It had been sorting for some twenty minutes, and it had got through nearly half of the 400,500 cards that represented the feminine population of Viridis. But the basket marked "Hold" was still quite empty. The man in the dark blue uniform sighed.

The man in the strictly tailored gray tunic who was standing beside him moved attentively. He did not venture to speak. The machine continued its soft, unproductive whirlring. The third man in the room coughed nervously, and then looked about him as if wondering to whom he ought to apologize.

The moments ebbed. Once more the seated man in the blue uniform sighed. The "Hold" basket stayed empty. At last, with a final soft click, the ibim stopped. It had gone through all the cards. A red light flashed.

The man in the gray tunic said, "Excuse me, sir. But it occurs to me that perhaps we're setting our sights too high."

"Possibly," replied the man in dark blue. "Let's see, now. Physical requirements—no, we daren't compromise any more on them. The physical requirements are the essence of the thing. Residence—what length of residence on Viridis were we asking for?"

"Ten years, sir."

"Ten years—ah, that's a little excessive. Have it reset to—let's say—three years. She ought to have absorbed a good deal of Viridian feeling in even that length of time."

The third man was already busy changing the ibim's wiring.

"Now, about psychic traits," the seated man continued. "It appears to me that we may have been a trifle over-strict in requiring that she be intelligent. What do you think, McPherson?" The man in blue was fond of asking the opinion of his subordinates; he liked the saving touch of informality it gave.

"I doubt she need be, really, sir," gray tunic answered deferentially. "Provided she's suggestible, and docile. But I do think—" he coughed twice, sharply, and cleared his throat — "I think we'd better be sure that she has the historionic ability. I mean, sir, that that's almost as much a part of the role as the physical requirements."

"I'm not so sure," the seated man answered. Gray tunic blinked.

His face, which was rather pale, may have turned a little paler."

"After all. if she believes in what she's doing," the seated man said," —and that's essential; she'll have to go through all sorts of tests— she'll handle the role adequatey without any histrionic flare at all. Eh?" He looked up at gray tunic almost mischeviously.

"Oh, certainly, I quite agree. Your point's very well taken, sir."

"But we'll try it with the histrionicity left in, this time," blue uniform said, relenting. "We'll lower the intelligence requirement, though ."

"*Yes,* sir." The man in the gray tunic ran his finger around inside his collar. He gave an unnecessary order to the third man.

This time the ibim had been talking to itself for only a few minutes when a card popped out. Gray tunic reached forward for it, and then stopped. He put his hands back by his sides and waited respectfully while the rest of the dossier cards clicked on by. Two-thirds of the cards had been sorted when another one popped up into the basket. That was all. The red light came on.

"Let's see what we've got," said the man in the dark blue uniform heavily.

"Yes, sir." A strictly tailored gray arm went out.

"Read them to me," the seated man said lazily.

"Yes, sir." He cleared his throat. "Amadeus, Leaf," he said.

The eyebrows of the man in the dark blue uniform went up a little. "Pretty name," he commented. "And oddly appropriate."

"Yes, sir. I mean, it certainly is. —Amadeus, Leaf. Age 27. Height 5' 6". Weight 109 pounds. Build, slender. Eyes, green. Skin color, very fair. Hair, dark red."

"She sounds first rate on the physical requirements," the seated man commented. "A little short, that's all. I wonder why we didn't get her card before."

"I think it's the residence requirements, sir. She's only been on Viridis a little over three years."

"Ah. Well, go on."

"Occupation, apprentice maskmaker in the veridical division. Planet of origin, Terra. History, born in Northern Hemisphere on Terra, educated in California, married at 17. Gave birth at 18, baby died, no other children known. Marriage dissolved by common consent after death of child. No recorded marriages or love affairs since that time."

"That's odd," the seated man commented.

"Yes, it is. Oh, I see down at the end of the card a written-in notation, 'Said to be a close friend of Bonnar in Verbal.'"

"That's better. I doubt we could

use a really cold type."

Gray tunic laughed dutifully. "Then there's some stuff about her hobbies—she's fond of reading and maskart—"

"Probably why she came to Viridis. We don't get many earth immigrants, you know."

"No, sir. Viridis has had bad publicity on Earth."

" . . . Go on."

"And then the dossier goes into her heredity. Oh. Something unusual, sir. It seems her great- grandmother was half Alpha Proximian. By art-sem."

"Really! Her great-great grandmother must have been infatuated with eugenics to try a cross like that. And a hasty woman, too. If I remember my history correctly, the whole enthusiasm about A-Proximians as sires lasted only about three months. After that some of the disadvantages of the strain became visible. I suppose that's where she gets that dark red hair."

"Probably, sir. It might even be the reason why she lost her child. It was a cross with disadvantages."

"Uh-hunh. What's the psychological estimate?"

"Intelligent, stubborn, suggestible, humanitarian. Some degree of ESP. Amorous temperament. And at the bottom, the interviewer's written, Should be able to play a part.'"

The man in the dark blue uniform relaxed. "She sounds like our meat, except for the stubbornness. And she would be stubborn, with a heredity like that . . . What's on the other card?"

"Auglinger, Caroline. Age 35. Height 5'8". Weight 144. Build, medium. Eyes, hazel. Skin color, medium. Hair, Titian red."

"A little old, and not so well suited physically. But go on."

"On Viridis since birth. Old Viridian famly, came here in Jovis migration. Educated here. Occupation, embroiderer."

"That's a body-servant occupation," blue uniform interrupted. "That's not an insuperable objection, though. Any marks or scars?"

"No, sir. You remember, scarlessness was one of the conditions we set up."

"That's right, it was. What about her personal history and the psychological estimate?"

"She's been married three times, the first when she was twenty-five. First husband was suspected of being a risen Lower—at any rate, he died in the second year. The other two marriages were ended by common consent. She had two children by the third spouse. She's not married at present, and seems to have no affairs."

"Um. Normal body-servant history, except for the first marriage. What boxes has the interviewer checked in the psychological esti-

mate?"

"Credulous, docile, conservative, nearly average intelligence. Average sexual drive. Oh, and the interviewer has written in, 'Fond of dramatizing herself and her troubles.'"

"Oh, dear. Did the person who punched those cards consider *that* histionicity? Hand the dossiers to me."

Gray tunic obeyed deferentially. The man in the dark blue uniform studied the cards for five minutes or so, whistling very softly to himself.

"Well, I don't think there can be much doubt of it," he said at last. "Leaf is the one. The only advantage Caroline has over her is that she would be easier to control. But I rather doubt that Caroline would be worth controlling. I'll have to take it up with the council, of course. But I imagine we'll select Leaf."

"Yes, sir."

* * *

A similar sorting, and for a similar purpose, went on a day or two later under quite different circumstances. These sorters worked in a room that was almost completely dark, and they were worried about the amount of power their ibim—an older model than the one blue uniform and gray tunic had used, but one which had been rewired to be quite fast—they were worried about the amount of power their ibim was using.

"Yes, but what could they do to us, after all?" said the tall man with the big nose, carrying on the conversation. "We're a legal organization, you know."

"We're a legal *cult*, you mean," the shorter man corrected. "We haven't any business at all to be having a machine like this. As to what they could do to us—do you want to have to take a walk down the Stairs?"

"They wouldn't," the taller man said quickly and nervously. "There's no real crime, and our cult's useful. In all the time Viridis has been settled, an Upper has had to go down the Stairs only twice. Anyhow, stop worrying. Our ibim is pulling less current than a heater would. There's nothing for them to get suspicion about."

"There's no real maskart down Stairs," the shorter man said hatefully. "Only a very little barrier protection. And polluted food. Have you ever really realized what that means, polluted food?"

"Oh, shut up. When you joined us, you made some promises. Serious ones. Are you forgetting them? What we're doing is important, the logical next step.—Here comes another card."

In the very dim light the two men studied the duplicates of the cards blue uniform and gray tunic

had studied. They discussed them quite fully. And in the end, just as blue uniform had done, they settled on Leaf.

BONNAR stood in his office looking out the window. It was in a poor part of town, too near the Stairs, and he disliked it. But Verbal mask, which was designed primarily for the consolation and manipulation of Lowers, never had the prestige of Veridical. Its practictioners always got the short end of the stick.

Not that he hadn't been successful, rather outstandingly so, as a mask-maker. His face brightened for a moment. Then it sank back into its normal sobriety. There might be such a thing as being too successful, mightn't there? He was beginning to think that there was.

Verbal did seem simple compared with Veridical. He'd heard it dismissed as a rumor shop. Actually, it was full of subtleties. There was the queasy matter of selecting the exact words in which to embody a mask idea—a selection made more difficult by one's having contact with Lowers only indirectly, through Body-servants. There was the tremendously sensitive business of gauging when, in the ebbing and flowing tides of Lower misery, to begin to implant a new mask. Details counted, and vehicles. But the final sureness of perception was demanded of one in knowing when the old mask had failed and a new one must be begun.

Misgauge that, and the whole social structure of Viridis would crack from side to side.

A responsible art, and a subtle one. Didn't it, after all, make Veridical, with its somewhat artificial emphasis on beauty, its projectors, lenses, sense impressors, look barren and mechanical?

He didn't see how anyone could answer that question with any word except "Yes." And yet a mask could be too successful. He was beginning to think that was what was wrong with the current one.

It must have met Lower psychological needs to a greater degree than anybody in Verbal had anticipated. A Lower had been killed in a food robbery the other day, near one of the clear warehouses. They'd blasted him, naturally. But the last words he'd shrieked from his blistered mouth had been, "She's coming! The Green Queen!" Had a Lower ever before died like that?

And not only among Lowers; it was beginning to get into Upper culture too, In the last month or so he'd heard of a symphony, two poems, and a statue, all concerned with the Green Queen. The people one met at dinner parties added details to the legend. And yet Bonnar had come up with the basic mask

idea himself not more than six months ago, and had done most of the work on it himself. It was curiously convincing; sometimes he wondered whether he had ever actually invented it—whether it hadn't, somehow, been distilled out of the soft air, or been exhaled from the damp soil of Viridis like a mist. He must have touched, have tapped, something much more powerful than he had realized.

There was a soft but oddly repulsive plop from the room behind him. He turned round, his face puckered with disgust. Yes, it was. One of the flying frogs. Dull gunmetal gray, the color of the sole of an old shoe, it was flopping frenziedly around the lamp on his table. How could it have gotten in? Through the dome, the barrier, his skylight? And yet there it was, plopping and leaping repulsively

He didn't want to touch it; it might carry fungus spores. With a net he scooped it up and dumped it down the chute. Then he turned back to the window and his thoughts.

Mightn't it be desirable to begin another mask? Yes, though the old one hadn't even begun to fail—was, in fact, stronger than ever. Desirable, certainly. But could it be done? Bonnar's eyebrows rose a little as the phrase—the definitive phrase—came into his mind. *The mask was getting out of hand.*

He didn't know why the explicitness of the words should be so startling. Their content had been latent in his mind for a long time. And there must be other instances of an overly-persistent mask in the history of Verbal. There might even have been techniques worked out for dealing with such a situation. He'd look the subject up and see what could be done after he had finished his interview with Leaf. All the same, *The mask was getting out of hand.*—There must be something more pleasant for him to think about than this.

About breaking off with Leaf? He didn't want to break off. Their relationship had lasted some three months now—longer than anything had since he was seventeen—and he wasn't at all tired of her. Leaf was ardent. That was very nice, delightful in fact, after the lukewarm response one got from Body-servants and even from some Uppers. But it wasn't these two things alone that made him like her. It was something more personal. Directness? Freedom? Spontaneity? Perhaps it was because she was from Earth. Or perhaps it was because she was Leaf.

No, he didn't want to break with her. But he had had an order. A man didn't rise to his position in his profession without being able to obey. Discipline, respect for authority was basic to his work. He

had to get Leaf to do what she was supposed to do.

Bonnar was suddenly profoundly depressed. It was the view from the window; he'd always disliked it. Naturally it was depressing. The pale green light, the flat pavement that was the exact mud color of a flying fog, and the ceaseless agitation of the writhing trees. (Why did he dislike the trees so much? Fairfield, also in Verbal, had done a most successful mask dealing with them. And yet Bonnar hated them, was bothered more by them every time he saw them. Their tormented writhings, no matter how much they might have deserved to suffer, were hideous. The red fruit they bore was delicious, but for years he hadn't been able to touch it. They affected him, he supposed, the way Lowers did.)

A wave of motion passed along the line of trees; there was a writhing tree not more that twenty-five feet from his office window. Ugh. With sudden energy Bonnar went to the big square cupboard in the corner and got a three-sense veridicial projector. There was no reason why he should see the trees writhing if he didn't want to.

He began to fuss with lenses and controls. Veridicial did, for the full effect, depend a good deal on the skill and the psychological attitude of the operator, but Bonnar could get by. He was good enough that he didn't have to use a previously recorded roll.

Slowly and with a semblance of effort the mask began to spread out. The windows of the office faded. The writhing trees wavered and then, as if sheets of gauze were coming down that gradually grew more solid, because a rank of blossoming apple trees. The backless bench under the trees on the corner turned to a grassy bank. There was a dusting of purple violets at its foot.

So far, so good. It needed more grass, and some little plants, iris maybe, by the trunks of the trees. Bonnar's family had been of Viridis for a long time. They had come there before the Jovis migration. Yet Bonnar, when he made the mask he wanted, made the flora of Earth). A brook—no, a spring—over to the left. A bright blue sky. More flowers in the grass—hoop-petticoat daffodils, and some low white California iris with gold on the petals. Clouds in the sky, puffy and slowly drifting. A breeze, not warm, not cool, like a caress from a skillful, loving hand. (Like Leaf's) Anything else? Perfume from the apple blossoms, sweet and faint. That was about it.

Bonnar stood back from the projector, admiring his handiwork. There it was, a spring day on Earth, beginning at his windows. And very nice.

Of course, it lacked the precision and clarity that a really good veridical would have had. It lacked organization. It wasn't five-sense. It was full of holes, really. But it was nice.

Leaf came forward smiling, under the apple trees to him.

Bonnar's heart began to pound. She was, as always, less beautiful, more individual, than he had imagined her. She had an excellent figure, but the only really beautiful thing about her was her hair. After her baby had died, she had had rather a hard time, and the experience had left marks on her. And yet, as she moved toward the apple trees toward him, there was a vitality in her that made his projected fantasy of terrestrial springtime as unreal as the sugar constructions on a cake.

He switched off the projector; he must remember to ask her whether the mask had been visible at all from her side. He swallowed and inhaled. Funny, he couldn't seem to get enough air into his lungs. —But of course he had to do what he had been directed to do Why did his heart hurt so?

* * *

She left his office a quarter of an hour later. Bonnar watched her from the window. He was feeling shaken and a little sick. He went to the cupboard from which he had got the mask projector, and rummaged about until he found an ethel eugenool bottle. He poured himself a big drink.

He couldn't stay away from the window. Drink in hand, he went back to it. Leaf was moving down the street slowly, toward the writhing trees. When she came to the backless bench on the corner, she sat down on it.

She had turned white—a greenish, ghastly white—when he had told her he didn't want to go on with her. "But I thought you lo—" she had said, and then bit off the words. She had been too proud to argue. But when he had suggested that she might find consolation, at least temporarily, in one of the religious cults, "for instance, The Apple Pickers." (he had congratulated himself on the delicacy with which the name had been implanted), she had looked at him as if he were something outrageous, a creature utterly outside her experience. She had laughed on a high note. He had almost broken them. And when she had turned toward the door, to go, she had put one hand in front of herself almost gropingly, as if she had suddenly become blind.

Could he have done anything else? No, of course not. If he hadn't broken off with her willingly, pressure would have been put on him—at first through his job, and then in more unpleasant ways—

until he *had* done it. It wouldn't have helped Leaf any for him to refuse. But he might have told her, mightn't he, that he didn't want to do it? That he was being forced to act?

Bonnar blinked, and then shook his head. No. he couldn't have. Leaf had to do what was expected of her. That she didn't know, and mustn't know, what it was, didn't after the issue. The great thing was discipline, authority. He had yielded to it. And so much Leaf, even though she yielded ignorantly.

He couldn't leave the window. He wanted to forget about Leaf, now the interview was over, and get back to his own work. He wanted to stop feeling unhappy, and even a little guilty, for having done what definitely was the right thing to do. But as long as Leaf was sitting there on the bench, bent over as if the green light oppressed her, her hands over her face, it was impossible. He had to keep watching her, if only to know what she would do.

He finished his drink, and poured another one. Once Leaf picked up her macquillage kit—it was hanging from a strap around her wrist—and opened it. But she put it down again, as if the task of making-up her face just now was too much for her.

There was a shrine of the Apple Pickers in the next street; he could just see it if he learned far to one side. If Leaf went into it, it meant that his delicately implanted suggestion had worked. Of course, even if she didn't, she might become interested in the cult later. The people who had told Bonnar he must break off his relationship with the girl had subtle but effective ways on influencing people.

At last Leaf straightened. She opened the kit and made up her face rather thoroughly. Her face was toward Bonnar, but she did seem to be feeling a little better. He was glad of that.

The branches of the tree were moving restlessly. One of the pendant dark red fruit was shaken loose by the motion. It fell on the ground at Leaf's feet with an almost audible plop.

Leaf looked up, toward the trunk of the tree. She must have seen the writing on the bark at nearly the same moment that it caught Bonnar's eye.

It was spelled out letter by letter, as if some invisible hand were writing, and in ink of glowing liquid gold. "The Apple Pickers are coming," it read. The slightest of pauses. And then, "Be ready," was added to the legend on the bark.

Bonnar felt a superstitious thrill that was almost fright. Then common sense reasserted itself. It was the . . . government, of course. The people who had told him to break

off with Leaf. They had a projector somewhere; there wasn't anything supernatural about it; it didn't make any difference that he couldn't make an accurate guess as to where the projector was located.

He wasn't altogether sure the projector was a good idea. Leaf was stubborn. She was really exceedingly stubborn. If she had known, for instance, that he didn't want to break off his relationship with her, she would never have acquiesced in it. And if she once got the idea that somebody was trying to make her enter Apple Pickers, she would never go near one of their shrines. Nothing outside of superior physical force would compel her.

The words faded from the bark, a letter at a time. They faded in the order in which they had appeared. Leaf was looking at the tree intently, her head a little tipped, her back stiff. New letters began to appear.

This time the gold was darker, with streaks of black and ominous red in it. And the message—Bonnar frowned—the message was darker too. "There's a serpent in every bushel of apples that we pick," it ran.

Well, it might appeal to Leaf's curiosity. The message did avoid the pitfall of making the Apple Pickers seem too attractive. But the trouble was that Leaf had almost no curiosity. She never asked questions or pried. It seemed a mistake to try to bait her through a quality she didn't have.

He had better watch his thoughts. This wasn't a good way to feel about people in authority.

The message stayed a little longer on the bark than the earlier one had done. Then it disappeared all at once, as if the projector had been switched off.

Leaf got up from the bench. She looked around her for a moment, as if she had forgotten something and couldn't remember what it was. Then she began to move down the street, in the direction of the Apple Pickers' shrine.

Bonnar let his breath out in relief. It wasn't sure yet, of course. But she could have taken another way home, and she hadn't. Yes, it did look . . . . .

He watched her, his body pressed against the glass. She was walking rapidly and jerkily, not at all like Leaf. He had always enjoyed watching her walking, since her movements were smooth and assured. Now, even in the midst of his curiosity, he was conscious of distress. It was unpleasant to see Leaf moving without grace.

The street was empty, except for her and a Lower. The Lower was a man in his thirties, though of course he looked much older. There were two big pustules on his chest, some fungus on his legs, and he

was exceedingly thin. He was so thin that his knee caps made big bulges and his spine was as sharp as the backbone of a fish. He'd been trying to cut his radioactive intake, of course. That was why he was so thin. But they oughtn't to allow Lowers in that condition on an upperlevel sreet.

Leaf was abreast of the shrine now. She wasn't slowing her pace. Her head was bent. She wasn't looking where she was going.

She didn't bump into the Lower; it was not so crude as that. The edge of his kilt brushed her hand; perhaps she smelled him, too. She looked up startled.

She made an involuntary gesture of repulsion and disgust. The Lower looked away from her wearily. And as if a spring in her had been pressed, she turned and entered the shrine.

Bonnar had a sharp sense of anticlimax. It oughtn't to have been like that. Had she turned into the shrine merely to avoid the Lower, or was it because the slogans on the tree bark had roused her curiosity? Or had the emotional gap left by his rejection of her motivated her action? It was impossible to say.

He turned from the window to his desk. He'd see what he could find out about mask-persistence. There were two or three questions . . . and possible sources for answers to them . . . He began to write on a pad.

He put the brush down after a moment. Why was it so important that Leaf enter the Apple Pickers? As far as he knew, it was a cult like any other one. Most cults were managed by future Body-servants who, in catering to the Uppers' craving for theological novelty, managed to put themselves on a precarious psychological equality with their lords. Sometimes the same Body-servant would pop up in cult after cult. Bonnar himself had always privately thought that the prevalence of cults was a certain indictment of the effectiveness of Veridical maskart. He couldn't see any reason why it was desirable for Leaf to enter *this* cult.

Oh, let it go. It wasn't his place to see any reason, provided his superiors did. And Ieaf had done what he had been trying to make her do. She had gone into the shrine. He didn't suppose he would ever see her again. He fumbled for the brush, but somehow he couldn't see it . . .

CHAPTER 2

"WHAT do you *want?*" the Lower asked desperately. His body was wet with sweat, and his face glistened with the tears he had shed in his pain. "What do you Uppers want from us? You come down stairs, down to our

habits, and hurt us. You twist our arms and hit us and take our women. Sometimes you do worse than that. But you're never satisfied. You always want something we can't give. If we knew what it was, we'd try to give it. What do you *want?"*

Bonnar paused for a moment. In the deep green light— always deeper, always greener, below Stairs—the Lower's sweaty body seemed to give off star-like reflections, to have the green-silk shimmer of Sirius. Was he sweating because Bonnar had hurt him? The mouth's twist, in the dim light, might express much beside pain.

"Be quiet," he ordered briefly.

"But what do you wan—Oh. Please. Oh." The tears began to run down the Lower's face, gently and uncontrollably.

There was an art to these things. Bonnar sighted scientifically, squinting in the dimness. (Did the Lower's question mean anything? No, fortunately. He didn't have to answer it. It was no more than an exclamation of pain would have been, quite meaningless.) "You know what I want," he said through his teeth. He tapped the Lower, lightly but accurately.

The Lower began to sob, no longer noiselessly. Bonnar hit him again.

* * *

An hour later, Bonnar was up Stairs once more. His face was flushed, and his jaw was set. The visit to the Lower had ended, as visits there always seemed to end, in a generalized frustration and dismay. He hadn't got what he had wanted. And even if he had brought a woman back with him, it would have been the same.

He'd have stayed down Stairs a little longer if the prick-dial on his wrist hadn't warned him that he was exceeding the limits of permissible exposure. It was a little satisfaction, though a poor one, to think that the Lower would remember him for a good many days.

Now what should he do? A woman, say a Body-servant? Oh. God.

He had been walking along steadily enough, headed for a decontamination stall. It was always a wise precaution after being below Stairs. Now he halted, transfixed by a sudden idea.

It was a simple enough idea, though it had been eluding him for the last three or four days, ever since he had known about Horvendile. But now he knew what was wrong, why his judgment seemed so biased that he felt he couldn't trust himself to fill out the report. He was jealous of Leaf.

There was a decontamination stall, of a rather old-fashioned architectural style, just ahead. It was studded with arabesques of the

small, cracked diamonds that had been so much in vogue ten or fifteen years ago. Bonnar stepped inside, pulling the fastenings on his clothes.

Robot hands reached out. With clumsy accuracy they undressed him. His discarded clothing dropped into a disposal unit. Warm soapy water began to pour down. Bonnar stepped under it.

The bath momentarily relaxed his tension. The warm, sweet-smelling flood seemed to wash away his self-questioning. He stood under it with mindless pleasure. But as the bath cooled and became astringent his doubt returned. Parting with Leaf had been painful. But he hadn't been jealous of her then. There hadn't been anybody else.

The shower shut off. If Bonnar had wanted it repeated, he could have pressed another button, but he was tired of soapy water. He stood quietly while the bath robot dried him. A packet of clean, warm clothes plopped out of a slot. Bonnar opened it and began to dress.

His really personal belongings were on a table to the right of the shower in a pouch. He had put the pouch there when he had pulled the fastenings on his clothes. Now he hung it around his neck again.

When he had first got the notice directing him, in formal, official language, to "resume the acquaintance of Miss Leaf Amadeus," he had been elated.

She had moved. He had had rather a time finding her. Her new place had been on the edge of town, near the barrier, a location that wasn't considered especially desirable. She had lived near Tandis Park before, a park that was outstanding for its daily displays of veridical.

She had changed. When she came to the door, he hardly knew her. Her hair was the same, but her face was smoother and more filled out and she moved with a more deliberate grace than he was used to in her.

"Oh—it's Bonnar," she said. "Come on in." She had smiled, but he had been uncomfortably aware that she wasn't especially glad to see him. She turned and led him into the maskart room. She did move more slowly than she used to, and hadn't she lost weight? Even though her face was fuller? He knew so well how her body was.

In the maskart room there had been a man, seated, quite at his ease. That had been a real shock, a real jar. Horvendile. Bonnar had hated him as soon as he saw him. Horvendile . . . .

Bonnar was finished dressing now. His old clothes would be laundered and checked for residual radioactivity. If they were usable he'd get a credit for them. If not,

they'd be destroyed. The contamination problem was a constant nuisance, if not quite a danger, even to Uppers.

Horvendile had been seated on the heavy, square-framed k'ang, his feet out straight in front of him. (About a third of the people who had come to Viridis in the first Jovis migration had been Chinese. They had brought with them the Chinese love of squareness and frontality. Now, four generations later, Viridian household furniture still showed their influence in its stolidity as well as its nomenclature.) He had got up from the k'ang politely when Bonnar came in.

Leaf had introduced them. Bonnar, already jealous, had seen a small, light-skinned, sandy-haired man, very well dressed. Horvendile, in fact, had been so well-dressed as to deserve the adjective "nett," and he was wearing the dark reddish brown jacket that anybody who was "nett" was wearing now. Bonnar had been unpleasantly conscious that his own costume had come from main depot and was standard Upper wear.

Horvendile, it seemed taught history at Shalom University. There was a scattering of conversation, and then an awkward pause. "Why don't you get us something to eat, Leaf?" Horvendile had said.

Oh, quite the airs of the master of the house! Bonnar, thinking about it now, felt the blood rise in his cheeks. And Leaf had risen and gone out for food obediently.

Left alone, the two men had not even tried to talk. Bonnar had stared at the other, knowing he was being rude, and not caring. Horvendile had kept looking up at the ceiling, a faint smile on his lips. "I'll see what's keeping Leaf," he had said finally, and gone out to the pantry after her.

The little vulgarian! He had the manners of a Body-servant, a Lower. a . . .Could it possibly be? No, nobody would be allowed to teach history without a thorough search having been made into his pedigree. Horvendile was as much an Upper as Bonnar himself. And yet there was something odd about Horvendile, something very odd indeed. Was he sorry for the Lowers? Sometimes you met Uppers who were. Bonnar had resolved to find out all he could about Horvendile.

The moments had passed. There was no sound from the food pantry. At last Bonnar, knowing he was behaving inexcusably, had got up and tiptoed the pantry. He had opened the door very, very softly and looked in. He had found Leaf in Horvendile's arms.

Or rather, Horvendile had one arm around her and was caressing her with the other hand. His air was

easy; he had caressed her before, he would do it again. And Leaf leaned away from him, her eyes shut, her breath deep-drawn. Her face wore the look, the excited, exciting, beautiful look Bonnar had seen on it so many times. It had taken all of Bonnar's self-command for him to tiptoe back to the maskart room and sit down quietly again.

Ever since. he had tried to tell himself that he had imagined it.

Leaf had come in with the tray of food at last, Horvendile tagging behind her. Bonnar had tried to chew a biscuit, sip some vermotka. It hadn't been a pleasant call. But before he left, he had asked Leaf to have dinner some night with him. She'd said she was busy, had refused.

Two days later he had received a form to fill out, a "report of progress" form.

What progress had he to report? The day after his visit he'd called Leaf and asked her to dinner—for a date, anything—again. This time her refusal hadn't been so positive. It was possible that in time he'd be able to get back on the old footing with her. If he didn't think he could, it was his duty to say so on the report.

And then they—the people who had told him to "resume the acquaintance of Miss Leaf Amadeus" — would send somebody else.

How could he know what progress he was making? His mind was shaken profoundly. Jealousy and desire and hate and rage were buffeting him. It was in an effort to resolve the chaos of emotion that he had gone down Stairs; and he had come back more desperate with conflict than ever. His impulse was to fill out the report with a glowing account of "progress" made, with an even more glowing account of progress for which he hoped. But how could he be sure what his motive was?

If only he had something to set beside his jealousy of Leaf, something creative and real that belonged to him, he thought he could fill out the report more objectively.

For a moment he felt a spark of rebelliousness. Why should he be so concerned for objectivity? He had obeyed once, when he had broken off his relationship with Leaf; and if the results of that obedience hadn't been quite what "they"would have liked, it was none of his affair. Let them pull their own chestnuts out of the fire. Then the habits of a lifetime reasserted themselves, and he was ashamed. Discipline was the basis of Viridian society. And discipline, in the end, served one's own interests best.

Bonnar had been walking along along slowly since he left the decontamination booth. The sun had set; outside, the night would be as

bright as moonlight from the ionizing layer in the air, but under the dome there was the good yellow glare of sodium vapor street lamps. Suddenly he thought of Candia.

Candia. For the first time in two days, his face really relaxed. It was not, in a sense, very dignified. But if he wanted something creative, something that belonged to him, Candia might be the answer. He rather liked her. And her suggestion was not without its flattery.

Candia was a woman of a type that was neither rare nor common on Viridis. Women like her were recognized, tolerated, and even modestly honored. Candia was a woman (Upper, of course) who loved child-bearing.

Bonnar had never been quite sure how many children Candy had had. He'd asked her about it once, and she had laughed and evaded him But from various casual references in her conversation, he thought it must be seven or eight. It was odd to think about, since she wasn't much over Leaf's age (better keep his mind off *that*), and seemed young and fresh.

Would her invitation—suggestion—still be open? It was a week or so since she had suggested, over glasses of anthelia at a party, that he might give her her next child. She had added parenthetically that it was nearly eight weeks since her last delivery. Bonnar had been too startled (shocked? No. startled) to do much except stutter in reply.

He couldn't phone her. The phone service in Shalom was out of order, as usual. The grapevine had it there had been some Lower sabotage. And he didn't want to drop in on Candy univited. She might have company.

In the end, Bonnar hailed a Body-servant who was going by in the street, and gave him a message to take to Candia. He was just across the street from Tandis Park. Unfortunately, there was no mask display scheduled there for tonight. But he showed the Body-servant the bench where he would wait for him.

Bonnar sat down and tried to interest himself in the crowd. Upper women, coiffed, furred, perfumed, walking with their free arrogant stride. Upper men, equally lordly, but with the air of tension that Upper male responsibility put on men. Two women, Body-servants, walking hand in hand. Was that getting more common? Bonnar didn't like it. A little Lower girl, trying to hide behind the Upper who was holdng her by the arm. Her eyes were round with wonder, but she as acutely aware of her rags. Two very young Uppers, boys really, who stared after her. A dazzingly beautiful Upper woman; Bonnar thought she must have made herself so beautiful because

she was beginning to fight the fear of age. More Body-servants. And...

Overhead there was a long, sliding rustle. It was repeated. Bonnar realized with a sick disgust at the pit of his stomach that he had seated himself on a bench underneath one of the writhing trees.

He couldn't move; the Body-servant with the message wouldn't know where to find him. But this was a bad omen for the beginning of something he hoped would help him overcome his jealousy of Leaf.

At last the man came back with the message. He hadn't been gone long, actually. A Body-servant with a message usually could be trusted to run all the way. It was the writhing trees that had made his absence seem so long.

Bonnar dismissed the man with a nod, and tore open the envelope. "Dear Bonnar," he read in Candy's big, slashing handwriting. "No, it's not quite too late. You know I always did like you. Come along! Candia."

Bonnar's smile changed into a grin. Um, yes. It was going to be all right.

Candy had a big apartment. She was getting a government bonus, which would help. As the Body-servant let Bonnar into the foyer, he heard a babble of soft, childish voices from the rooms within. Then a door seemed to close.

"Miss Dee says for you to wait," the servant told him. "She'll be right down."

Down? Oh, yes. There was a balcony at one end of the foyer. Candy must be dressing up there.

Bonnar looked around him. He stood in a big, high-ceilinged room with black woodwork and white walls. The ceiling was Chinese red. The room was big enough to be wonderfully suited to maskart, but from the way the chairs were placed, it probably never was used for that.

He sat down on the k'ang. It was admirably thick-matted and deep. Around the room were scattered evidences of childish occupation—a striped ball, a stuffed green and lavender *folodom, a Young People's History of the Jovis Migration.* On the back of a chair was a tiny knitted jacket that must belong to the latest arrival in Candia's nursery.

All very domestic. Nothing could have been more maternal, more admirable. But Bonnar found that this male-less interior, this almost parthenogenetic emphasis on mother and child, oppressed him. He got up and began to pace around the room restlessly, picking up objects, examining them, and putting them down again. A picture over the big rosewood and brass secretary in the corner caught his eye. He went over to it.

It was a large picture, one of the

depth stereos that had become popular lately. Bonnar looked at it for a moment uncomprehendingly. Then he began to laugh.

It was Candia, of course—the round, rather vapid face and the blonde hair were unmistakable—Candia and her children. And what a lot of them there were! One, two, three, four, five, on up to nine, if you counted the baby Candia was carrying. And the baby looked rather older than seven weeks, so the picture must have been taken last year. By now Candia's score would be ten.

Nine children when the picture was taken, and all of them different. Some blonde, some brunette, some with oriental eyes, one with red hair. All different, and all strikingly good-looking. He ought to be flattered—well, in a sense he was—at Candia's interest in him.

Still chuckling, Bonnar moved away from the stereo. It occured to him that he was feeling much better. Leaf—he just wouldn't think about Leaf any more.

Half-hidden at the edge of the litter of papers on the big secretary desk, a singularly vivid triangle of orange paptex glowed up at him. Bonnar looked at it, frowning a little. Where had he seen paptex of that intense orange before? It looked official, it reminded him of something unpleasant.

It wasn't any of his business. Candia's papers were her own affair.

Then he remembered. It had been at a party. The quota was one of the things people didn't talk about—one of the painful, hateful necessities that life on Viridis, where the supply of non-polluted food was so limited, forced on society. But the woman he had been talking to held a high position in he Bureau of Demography, and she had had enough to drink that her ordinary good manners were relaxed. He had expressed interest in quota mechanisms. She had pulled an orange out-quota notice from her hand-pouch and showed it to him.

If the piece of orange paptex on Candia's desk was an outquota notice, it was very much his affair.

He ought to wait until Candia came down, and then ask her about it. But . . . Unhesitatingly Bonnar drew the sheet from under the pile and looked at it.

The message was couched in the usual official verbiage, but the meaning was clear enough. The Bureau of Demography regretfully informed Miss Candia Dee . . . that any children or child . . . born to her between (a date two weeks in the past) and (a date over a year in the future) . . . . would be held outquota. A separation would be regretfully enforced . . . .two months after the birth of

said children or child and . . . consequences.

The consequences were enumerated in small type below.

So. Even when Candia had made her suggestion at the party, she'd known.

There was step on the balcony overhead. Bonnar turned, still holding the out-quota notice in his hand.

There was a wave of perfume, flower-like, very sweet, and Candia started down the stair toward him.

For a moment Bonnar forgot everything. Candia knew her limitations; she had made no attempt to present herself as more than she was. Her hair was combed, her face was lightly madeup. That was all. But from shoulder to waist she was naked; she was wearing a gown of jet black fabric whose high collar and long sleeves made more deliberate its astonishing decolletage. Against the intense blackness of the material her nakedness had a hieratic, ritualistic quality. Her skin was dazzlingly white. And despite her multiple-pregnancies—perhaps because of them—the outlines of her body were astonishingly virginal.

She came toward him, her hands outstretched, welcome in her voice. "Bonnar! I'm so glad." Then her eyes fell upon the sheet of paptex in his hand. "Oh . . ." she said.

Bonnar thought, does it make any difference? This is Candia's affair. He could put the out-quota notice down on the desk and forget about it, take Candy's hands and sit down beside her on the k'ang. Candy wouldn't mention the notice unless he did. But he couldn't get it out of his mind.

No, it wouldn't work. What he had wanted from Candy hadn't been a short-lived physical relief. That wasn't too hard to come by though, he liked Candia well enough. But he had thought that fatherhood would have been something to set beside his jealousy of . . .Miss Leaf Amadeus. meaningful enough to have counterbalanced it. There wasn't much satisfaction in being the father of an out-quota child.

Candia was looking at him. "What's the matter?" she said at last. "Are you going to let that bother you?" She hadn't a particularly attractive voice.

"Doesn't it bother you?" After a pause he went on, "You love children, Candia. But do you want a child of yours to be reared as a Body-servant? Or, more likely, to have to go down the Stairs? Lowers don't live very long. And they don't like their lives."

She made a gesture. Her face twisted up. "I've thought about it so much," she said. "But I love babies. And it's more than a year,

Bonnar, it's such a long time.

"How can I wait that long? You don't know what it's like to have a baby, Bonnar, it's a kind of direct creation, it's wonderful. A man can't imagine how it feels. And giving birth's the most wonderful of all. It's such a triumph! When you hear the baby's first cry. . ..

"Maybe they'd let my baby be a Body-servant. I hope they would. But I'd get to have it for the first two months, anyhow. I'd get to nurse it for the first two months."

She seemed to have finished speaking. She was looking away from Bonnar and down at the floor.

There was a silence. At last Bonnar said, "No. Not my child."

He started past her toward the door. Candia shivered. "You—you're going?" she said. Her voice was a little high. "You won't even sit down by me on the k'ang? We could discuss it, Bonnar. Maybe you'd decide . . ."

"I'm sorry, Candia."

"Go on, then," she said. She tried to sneer. It was not a very good sneer, for Candia's face was more used to making the gentle expressions of maternity, but she managed it. "Go on. If you're not man enough—well, there are other men."

"Get one of them, then," Bonnar said. He went out. The Body-servant looked at him with a surprised face as she met him in the front hall.

* * *

Bonnar lived in a small flat not far from his office. He went home, went to bed. He had taken a sleeping pill. He couldn't get to sleep.

At last, about two in the morning, he got up and dressed. The "report of progress" he was supposed to fill out was still lying on the table where he had put it down when he had opened it. He looked at it without picking it up. Then he locked the door of his flat behind him and went out into the street.

It was so late that the yellow sodium vapor street lights had been shut off. The moon-bright radiance of Viridian night shone unimpeded through the fabric of the dome. The streets looked clean and flat and wide in the unfamiliar bleached white light.

He began to walk. Several times he was stopped by peace officers, but he was unmistakably Upper. Only one of them even made him show his laissez-passer.

He walked for hours. Shalom, in the penetrating white glow, was oddly different from its daylight self. More than once he had to look at the street name imbeded in the curb before he knew where he was.

At last he looked at his watch; it was a little after four; in not very much longer it would be dawn. The streets of Viridis would be

green again. He might as well go home. He was so tired that he thought he could sleep for a few hours.

Where had he got to? He was on the edge of the city, near . . . Oh, yes, of course. His mouth twisted as he tried to laugh. His legs had taken him, without conscious direction, very close to where Leaf lived.

Why not? Why shouldn't he look? He wanted to. And then he'd go home.

Leaf's apartment was on the second floor of a block of flats. To his surprise—it was well after four by now— a dim light shone through the thin matting that covered the windows. It looked as if there were a light, not in the maskart room itself, which was on the front, but in one of the rooms behind.

He stood watching. He didn't know what he was waiting for. The light grew brighter, as if a door had been opened. A shadow seemed to approach the window blind.

It was Leaf. The shadow was blurred, but he would have recognized it anywhere. She seemed to be hurrying into the maskart room.

Another shadow followed her. This one was unmistakable too. Damn him, damn him. Horvendile.

They seemed to argue. Once Leaf put out her hand toward the other shadow as if to push it away. She shook her head. But shadow Horvendile was persistent. He put his arm around her shoulders. She resisted a moment and then let him draw her up to him.

The embrace grew closer. Horvendile's face bent to Leaf's. She put her arms around her neck. There was a long, deep kiss. When it ended, Horvendile, his arm still around Leaf, drew her gently from the maskart room.

Still interlaced, the shadows retreated. The light grew dim again, as if a door had closed. After a moment the light went out.

Bonnar was shaking with rage. It didn't occur to him that the scene he had witnessed could have any interpretation other than the obvious one. For a moment he thought of breaking the door down, killing Horvendile. Then reason asserted itself. He turned and began the long walk home.

It was broad green day when he let himself into his flat. He went straight to the table beside the k'ang, picked up the "report of progress," dipped a brush in ink, and began filling it in.

When he had finished writing, he read his work. What he had put down on the report wasn't quite true. *Quite* true? Most of it wasn't true at all. But it *would* be true; he'd see to that.

He yawned. He undressed and got into bed. He was asleep almost at once. He wouldn't have believed

it if somebody had told him that the report he had just filled out would change the course of Viridian history.

CHAPTER 3

"JANSEN'S work, Horvendile said. He indicated the suburban street which, lined on both sides with elegant "advanced" houses, began abruptly and without preamble in the middle of the heavy jungle undergrowth, ran for some fifteen hundred feet as straight as the marks of a ruler, and came to an end again as abruptly and unreasonably as it had begun. There was not a single weed come up in the pavement of the street, not a blade of grass in the houses' neat concrete yards; but over the tops of the buildings the tall trees of the rain forest had closed in to make an almost solid roof.

"Jansen the First, Contractor of Viridis," Horvendile continued, smiling. "The man's energy was enormous. There are streets like this all over Viridis, sometimes even whole villages, except in the very worst radioactive areas. Sometimes the glass in the windows is cracked, but the houses themselves are made of permastone, and they're nearly as fresh as they were when they were built two hundred years ago. I don't suppose three percent of them have ever been

lived in, but they're complete down to the tiling in the kitchens and the perfume showers in the bath.

"Why? You seem surprised, Bonnar. Haven't you ever been outside before? Jansen's in all the history books."

Bonnar considered. "I'd read about it," he said at last. "But I don't suppose I realized how it was. What was he trying to do, anyhow?"

"Jansen? Oh, build an empire. What he'd have called an empire, I mean—really, a planetary government with himself at the head. He thought the best way of getting followers would be to offer them beautiful free housing. He loved to build. And he was a very rich man."

Bonnar was still thinking. "I don't see how they could have made a mistake like that," he said slowly.

"Like thinking the unprotected surface was habitable? It is odd. But you see, their instruments for measuring radioactivity were defective. Nobody knows just how it happened; some historians think there was deliberate sabotage on the part of Jansen's political opponents.

"At any rate, their instruments were defective. People lived in the houses—some of the houses—for about six months before they realized that anything was wrong. There was a good deal of anxiety, probably from an unconscious realization of bodily damage occuring, and some of the settlers had low-grade fevers and skin rashes, but Jansen had a dominating personality, and he persuaded them to ignore it. They thought it was just fungus. Then the big bad lesions broke out. People started dying. They recalibrated their instruments in a hurry after that."

Horvendile had made his explanation with his usual air of faint mockery. It was as if he never quite believed in anything he said. This time Bonnar was not much bothered by it. "Is that why the law about recalibration was passed?" he asked.

"The law that all instruments to measure radioactivity must be calibrated against those already in use on Viridis before they can be introduced into the planet? Yes They were afraid of further sabotage, you see."

Horvendile halted. Through the leaded glass of his helmet Bonnar could see his sandy eyebrows raised. Then he got up from the hillock where he had been sitting and made a sketchy, half-formal, half-humorous bow. "Hello, Leaf."

The girl moved along the street toward them. In the strange, subaqueous light that filtered down through the long leaves of the Lepidodendrons and calamites to lie

in stripes of lime green and ashy gray on Jansen's pavement, she seemed not so much to walk as to drift, as if she pressed her way through a medium denser and more resistant than air.

She was, always, graceful. Even in the heavy protective suit of lead-coated fabric she moved well. But as she got nearer Bonnar saw, through the glass of her helmet, that her face still wore the dreaming, remote, self-centered look that so irritated and frightened him. He glanced toward Horvendile. The historian was looking down, frowning. He seemed to dislike the expression Leaf had been wearing as much as Bonnar did.

"Hello, my dear," Bonnar said when she had got up to them. "You were gone a long time. Did you find what you were looking for?"

"No." She raised her hands toward her helmet, as if she would have liked to press her head. "I don't think it's here. We'll hunt further on tomorrow. But look." Leaf's expression lost its dreamlike quality and became animated; Bonnar watched the change with a pleasure that was blighted with jealousy, since it was Horvendile she was speaking to. "It's getting dark. Let's hunt through the houses and decide which one we want to sleep in. That would be fun." She smiled at the historian.

Bonnar bit his lip. He was afraid that Leaf or Horvendile would glance toward him and see that he was flushing. Oh, the shameless, shameless .... Then common sense came to his rescue. They were all wearing the heavy protective lead suits. They all knew the danger. It was unsafe, really, to eat or eliminate. As far as anything . . .else went, Leaf and Horvendile might as well be wearing reciprocal belts of chastity.

He glanced toward the sky. The foliage was too dense for him to see the sun, but the light did seem to be dimmer. Horvendile was nodding agreement with Leaf's plan. They started along the street, laughing and talking. He followed them.

Now that he had no longer the distraction of Horvendile's disquisition on Jansen, his worries returned to him. He was on a spot, all right. A bad spot. No doubt of it.

There was, in the first place, his reports about Leaf. After he had sent in the initial one, he had received a long questionaire to fill out. There had been over a hundred questions, ranging from Leaf's current sleeping habits to what she said about the activities in the Apple Pickers, and he would have been able to answer only twenty or so of them with the confidence of real knowledge. A confession of ignorance would have been dangerous; it would have meant that in his first

report he had lied. So he had filled in the answers at random, sweating with anxiety.

Time had passed; he had begun to hope that his answers had been right, or at least plausible. (If only he had been able to see some trend behind the question! Then he would have known what answers to give. But he couldn't make out what they were driving at.) Yes, he had begun to hope that he had got away with it. But two days ago he had received a slip requesting him to report for "clarifying examination" in connection with the questionaire.

Oh, he was on a spot. He had heard stories about what "clarification" could amount to. He woke up in the night thinking about it, feeling sick.

That in itself had been bad enough. But there had been trouble with the new mask.

It hadn't been a bad mask, really. He and a couple of his assistants had worked hard on it. It had stressed the identity between the Lowers' dim, green-lit world below Stairs and a romantically hostile jungle, and had inculcated with reasonable subtlety the need for patience, courage, and self-sacrifice in dealing with both. But a man named Kramner had been killed last week by Lowers and one of the Lowers had said that Kramner was an evil jungle animal that deserved to be killed. He had cited phrases from the current mask in proof. Would they hold Bonnar responsible?

Rumor had it that Kramner was an important Upper, perhaps even one of the Eleven, who spent a lot of time below Stairs.

For a moment phrases and fears shifted kaleidoscopically in Bonnar's mind. High treason . . . The person of an Upper shall be secure . . . .social stability . . . The Eleven is *actually* the government . . .Does Miss Leaf Amadeus wear much metal jewelry? . . . . Then his thoughts settled in immobility, a conviction that ran: I'm on a bad spot. I can think of only one way to get off of it.

Horvendile and Leaf had paused in front of one of the houses. From a long way off there was a hollow reverberating crash; somewhere deeper within the rain forest a tree had fallen. But Leaf and her companion were too absorbed in each other to turn.

Bonnar looked at them unseeingly, for once not jealous. This trip with Leaf represented—it was the only way he could think of it—his last hope. If he could find out what the government wanted from her, why she was important, he might be able to get through the clarifying examination safely. But if he could discover what Leaf herself was hunting, it might be— it *must* be,

he was on such a bad spot—it might be a piece of information so important that he could bargain against Kramner's death with it.

But what little luck he'd had so far! The day before yesterday Leaf had come to him and asked him to help her and Horvendile get a laissez sorter from Shalom. He'd been overjoyed at the chance to get back in contact with her. He'd told her certainly, yes, he'd get the pass for her, but he was afraid he would have to go along too. Security reasons. And she'd accepted his presence on the trip gracefully enough.

So far, so good. He'd even succeeded in getting a 'copter out on loan from the two that were assigned to Verbal, and he'd piloted. But as soon as he had set the ship down in a clear spot near where she told him, she had seemed to draw away from him. He had tried to accompany her when she had gone walking off into the forest; she had turned on him and told him to go away, he prevented her from thinking. And to every overture of his since then she had responded with blankness or an actual warding off.

"It might be fun to sleep in this one," Leaf was saying. "I like the color of the roof, that luminous blue-green, and the pink plaster—I know it's not plaster, but it looks like that—has been put on so heavily, in those long curving lines, that the house looks like it had been covered with some sort of long-haired fur. Don't you think it would be fun to sleep in a pink fur house, Horvendile?"

"Un-hunh," the historian answered. He was looking at her with a faint grin, but his eyebrows were still folded in a frown.

"But what's that thing in the yard behind it?" She pointed. "It doesn't seem to be made of the same material as the house. It looks like an afterthought."

"The beehive-like thing?" Horvendile answered. "Yes, it was an afterthought. When the settlers found out that living in the open country was dangerous, some of them still wanted to stay. They built shelters, hoping that if they spent part of the time in them, it might be safe to live in the houses the rest of the time. Would you like to look at the shelter, Leaf?"

"Yes, I would."

They started around the house toward the shelter. Bonnar followed them.

The shelter was a crude elongated dome about seven feet across and six feet high. It had been plastered or painted a leaden gray on the outside. It couldn't have held more than one person in comfort, and two people would have been its absolute capacity. There was no window anywhere in it.

"Do you want to look inside?" Horvendile asked when the three

were standing around the shelter. "If it's like most of the hastily-built shelters, the door rolls up like those old desks we saw in the museum."

"Yes, I'd like to see inside."

Horvendile fumbled along the ground and pressed. After a moment, a section of the side of the shelter slid up. They peered within.

"I can't see anything," Leaf said. "It's got too dark. Turn on your torch, Horvendile."

He obeyed. The interior of the shelter leaped into visibility. Leaf gave a cry.

"Oh, a man! A skeleton. Oh!"

"I'm sorry, Leaf," Horvendile answered. He had already switched off the torch. From the tone of his voice, he was disturbed. "I didn't know there would be anybody inside."

"No, of course not. — How do you suppose he died?"

In the dusk, Bonnar could barely make out that Horvendile shrugged. "Might have been radiation exposure. He might have been already sick when he went to the shelter. Maybe he got a bad case of fungus; people have died from it. Or if the others went away and left him, he might have starved."

"Or he might even have killed himself," Leaf said with an attempt at composure. She seemed to raise her hands to her head. "I can still see the bones," she said in a flat, uninflected voice. "Like a tree of white needles coming out from the spine . . . Horvendile, I know what happened to him."

"Oh? What was that?"

"He broke his leg after the others left him, and he couldn't get to his food. He was afraid of radiation poisoning— that's why he was in the shelter—but it wasn't that that killed him. He starved to death."

Horvendile was silent for an instant. Then he flicked the beam of his torch on her face. Bonnar saw that she was very white. "How do you know?" Horvendile asked.

"Oh . . . He told me."

Horvendile gave a faint, soft whistle. It was almost dark under the trees, but the nightly band of moon-like radiance was spreading over the sky. None of them moved for a moment, though Bonnar found that he was shivering within his protective suit. Then Horvendile said, "Well—we'd better find another house where we can sleep."

Leaf seemed to have lost all interest in the houses. She stood by passively while Horvendile settled on a big, rambling building with boldly tesselated walls, followed him docilely along the path to it, and stepped inside with her maddening sleep-walker's air when he had managed to get the door open. It was not until their three sleeping bags had been laid out around

the walls of the central hall—well separated from each other, Bonnar saw with relief—that she recovered any of her vivacity.

"This house seems absolutely virginal," she said, sweeping the cornice and walls with the beam from her torch. "I suppose the checkerboard designs were too much for any of Jansen's followers. But why don't the lights come on, Horvendile?"

"After two hundred years?" the historian answered. "It's wonderful that the houses are as well preserved as they are. Besides, Jansen didn't realize that there are enough radioactive metals at almost any spot at all on Viridis to furnish power. (You remember what I was telling you, Bonnar.) As far as that goes, we don't use radioactives very much for power even in Shalom. Jansen depended on solar energy."

"And I suppose the mirrors are br—Oh! What was that?"

"That" had been a shock that had sent Leaf almost to her knees. She clutched wildly at the wall to recover herself. The whole room shook and tilted.

"Earthquake!" Horvendile exclaimed. He pulled Leaf and Bonnar under the door jamb. "Safest place," he said in explanation. "House is well built, though. Don't be scared."

The room shook again. From somewhere deep below there was a long, grinding roar. Then the house settled back into silence and stability.

"That's probably all for tonight," Horvendile said after a moment. "Leaf, are you all right?"

"Yes. I—I expect I'm just hungry. For a minute I thought I saw something deep down . . . Never mind. It's been a long time since lunch. Let's have some nutri-soup."

Bonnar got out three of the small waxed containers from the pack on his back. Horvendile had set two of the torches on the floor in an upright position, so that they gave enough light to eat by. The three squatted down on the black and white squares. Timing his movements carefully, Bonnar opened the cartons, shoved straws in, and passed them to the others, who had already opened their helmets enough to put the straws in their mouths.

For three minutes or so there was a silence broken only by the sounds of rapid swallowing. They were all trying to make the period of exposure as short as possible. Then Leaf closed her helmet and got to her feet.

"I'll be back," she said.

"The plumbing doesn't work either, my dear," Horvendile said lazily.

"Oh . . ."

When she was gone, Bonnar's

anxiety was suddenly too much for him to contain in silence. "Horvendile—" he said.

"Yes?" The smaller man leaned toward him. In the light of the two torches his face was the face of an ally.

"Horvendile, what's Leaf hunting anyhow?"

The other man shook his head. "I don't know. I just don't know. When I try to find out, she either won't answer or gets angry. I didn't think she'd be like that with me."

The last words sent a muted pang of jealousy through Bonnar. "No, I don't know what she's hunting," Horvendile continued. "I feel that it isn't, umh, quite what she'll be hunting later. And I suppose she isn't sure what she's looking for herself."

He began picking up the empty nutrisoup cartons and straws. He tossed them into the big black-tiled fireplace and set fire to them. "Botanist I know was out in the field with a party last year," is said in explanation. "collecting specimens. He said they didn't have any trouble at all with carnivores, even with Felodons, unless they left nutrisoup cartons lying around. Then not only the carnivora jumped them, but even some of the little egg-layers. I guess nutrisoup smells better to them than it does to us."

The cartons burned with a waxy crackling. The chimney must have been almost clear; very little smoke came out in the room. There was a plop and then another one as two night-flying moths, attracted by the sudden light, hurled themselves against the permapane. Leaf reentered the room.

"Bonnar," she said without preamble, "do you think you could put the 'copter down about two miles from here, pretty nearly south east tomorrow?"

"Sure. I mean, I'd be glad to."

"Thank you. And now, let's go to bed. I think we must all be tired."

Bonnar had trouble getting to sleep. His protective suit was a miserably uncomfortable thing to sleep in, and his personal difficulties, the spot he was on, weighed on his mind. About midnight it began to rain. The sound at first seemed an added vexaton, but as the noise increased to a steady drumming roar, he found it soothing. He slept deeply for four or five hours.

* * *

Next day was rainy also. He put the 'copter down where Leaf told him, and he and Horvendile watched her from the shelter of the cabin as she moved about slowly in the grayish haze of rain. He and the historian found little to say to each other.

Toward noon it cleared. They had their nutrisoup in the open.

Suddenly Leaf, who had been sucking away on her straw like the others, pushed the carton from her. It fell on the ground and rolled over. Pinkish liquid began to spill out.

"It's here," she said in a high voice. "Here."

"What's here?" Horvendile demanded. He got to his feet and stood facing her, nearly as excited as she was. What's here? What are you talking about?"

"The—what I was hunting for. What I *thought* I was hunting for. The thing."

"Where is it? What's it like?"

It's a—long way down." She pointed to the ground. "Hundreds and hundreds of feet. The quake last night changed the level. It's under layers of lava. But it's here."

Hornvendile was biting his lips. He seemed exasperated enough to be grinding his teeth. "*What's* there" he demanded. "What are you talking about? Leaf, for God's sake!"

"I'm trying to tell you," Leaf answered reasonably. She put one hand up, as if she would have pushed a strand of her dark red hair away from her face. "I don't know what the name of it is," she continued. "It's about four feet long, a sort of gold color. Not gold, really —more coppery. It's shaped like a spindle, only shorter and more thick."

"And that's what you've been looking for all the time? A spindle-shaped thing made of gold?"

"Yes. I mean no—it's what I *thought* I was hunting. The real thing I've been looking for is— I don't know how to express it— more big. That's why I haven't been able to find it. It's like the biggest letters on a map. You overlook them just because of their size. This gold thing wasn't hard. I don't know why it took me so long to pick it up."

"But you can see this gold thing, down through the rocks."

"Yes."

"And you don't know what it is? What it was used for?"

"No. I get an impression of fire from it. It's empty now."

Both the men were staring at Leaf. She lowered her eyes to the ground, where the pink puddle of nutrisoup was spreading out. For a moment there was silence. Then from the brush behind them came a single deep resounding note.

All three spun round. Bonnar and Horvendile knew what the belched-out sound meant: Leaf must have surmised. A Felodon! It cronched, massive, terrible, ready to spring on them.

It looked like they were for it.

Horvendile thrust Leaf behind him. "Run," he ordered harshly. "Run, get in the 'copter. We'll hold him off."

Leaf put out her hand and pushed his gun aside. "It's all right," she said. "I'll send him away." Before Horvendile could stop her, she was walking steadily out toward the Felodon.

Her movement seemed to trigger the big animal's nervous instability. It did not even give its usual short warning scream. There was a twitch along the fur of the lavender flank. It leaped.

Bonnar was too amazed to feel horror, to feel any emotion at all. Mouth open, eyes wide, he waited for Leaf to buckle and roll under the impact.

The Felodon's long leap seemed to corrode in mid-air. For a moment it hung motionless, like a green and purple Nijinshi. Then it dropped, rolled over, and collapsed in a wildly waving tangle of tail and claws a little in front of Leaf's feet.

Leaf bent forward a little. The Felodon stopped moving. It seemed to have turned to stone. Leaf put one hand out over the green plush head. She made a lifting motion. Clumsily and almost reluctantly the Felodon got to its feet.

It spat at her. Hatred and frustration and helplessness made its nasty little eyes almost incandescent. Once more it spat at her. Then it screamed very briefly and tramped off into the brush.

Bonnar realized that he was panting. He looked at Horvendile. The smaller man was very pale, and his forehead was wet.

"That was almost a miracle, wasn't it?" the historian said. He managed to laugh. "Leaf—Leaf—it was worthy of the Green Queen herself!"

Bonnar stood very still. At Horvendile's words something had clicked inside his brain. There was much that was still unclear to him; sudden insight warred with blank incomprehension. What Leaf herself was hunting, what had happened to her, what Horvendile's role was—he could form no idea of these things.

But the enlightenment that had come to him was absolute. It was no reasonable, but he knew that it was true. The Green Queen was a character is a mask he had made. She had never existed, and the mask itself was becoming a nuisance. Yet someone, perhaps the government, perhaps someone high in the government, wanted Leaf to assume the role of the Queen.

That was why she had been propelled into the Apple Pickers, why Bonnar himself (and perhaps others?) had been set to pull and prod her into behaving as was wished. She was to be a puppet, a figurehead, very far indeed from a real queen.

Such a procedure was dangerous. The danger to be avoided by it must be great.

Could Bonnar use his new knowledge to save himself? Perhaps; and now that he knew this much, he might be able to learn more. Oh, yes. There were all sorts of possibilities.

Horvendile had gone over to Leaf. He put his arm around her and drew her to him. Bonnar looked at them unseeingly. He had begun to smile.

CHAPTER 4

"THE Green Queen is supposed to have certain traditional powers," Bonnar explained wearily. "She has clairaudience and clairvoyance and cryptaesthesia, for example."

He paused, and glanced at Auglinger. How was she taking all the big words? Yes, just as he'd expected, her jaw was dropped and she was looking at him blankly. Her expression was always blank; she had remarkably stupid eyes.

He sighed. "I mean," he glossed his own word choice, "that the Green Queen is supposed to be able to hear and see things happening at a distance, and to perceive the contents of closed containers and so on! Now, we can't do much in the way of simulating powers like those. But the Green Queen is also supposed to be able to kill with a gesture of the hand, to be able to revive and restore by a touch. We *can* approximate those gifts artificially.

"That's why it's so important for you to learn to manipulate, and manipulate skillfully, the rods hidden under your cothes. Do you understand?"

Auglinger looked at him doubtfully. After a moment she nodded though even more doubtfully, her carroty head. "Yes. I guess."

"Good. Try it again. This time, the long spark."

Caroline Auglinger glanced at him nervously. With a good deal of wriggling she managed to get her plump white hand down inside the waist-high slits of her embroidered robe. More wriggling, a weries of body-bumps. A moment of painful expectation, while she visibly felt along the row of controls in the front of her dress. Then, at long last, from her stiffly outstretched left hand, there shot out a feeble spark.

"You're using the wrong hand," Bonnar said patiently. "You must stretch out your *right* hand and work the controls with the left."

"Oh. I thought I *was* using my left."

Once more Caroline Auglinger, Green Queen, anti-Leaf fumbled inside her robe. A nimbus appeared around her head and then flickered off again. There was another pause, long, painful. expectant. Auglinger's milky skin

grew flushed.

From the end of her extended right hand a long, blue spark shot out. It was a good, powerful-looking spark, quite the best she had yet produced. Bonnar wanted to applaud.

The spark hung in the air for a minute. Slowly it began to sag down, in a paling, disspirited arc. Before it could touch the floor or disappear entirely, it seemed to correct itself. It shot up Caroline Auglinger's wrist.

The woman uttered a sharp, surprised cry. "Oh! Oh! I've stung myself!"

Bonnar felt no desire to laugh. This had happened a number of times before; no doubt it would happen several times yet again. "Yes," he said. He put his hands over his eyes. "You'd better rest."

Caroline Auglinger relaxed. From the unnatural, ram-roddy stiffness her body took on when she was trying to personate the queen, her normal slumped posture reappeared. She sat down in a chair with a thump. "Thank you," she said.

Bonnar took his hands down from his eyes and looked at her Why did he dislike her so? She was reasonably young not impossibly bad looking. And yet he continually felt an intensity of dislike that, from a male to a female, was surprising. The more he attempted to train her in her role, the more he resented her.

Partly, of course, it was because she simply wasn't Leaf, He found that he was unconsciously trying to make her behave as Leaf would have behaved. And when she showed herself recalcitrant and inept, his dislike of her increased.

But there was more to it than that. Would she do for the Green Queen at all? She had to; she was all they had. And they had trained her carefully. They had dieted her to make her lose weight, exercised her to make her less flabby. Experts had worked painstakingly on her diction, her bearing, her voice.

No training could disguise the tawdriness of her spirit. It was incurable. It shone through every improvement that they imposed on her, and rendered the changes ludicrous. Whatever they did, she remained a silly, vapid woman, dressed up for a queen.

Would she do for the Queen? Perhaps. From a distance, with the light coming from an angle, with all the prestige of the government behind her—she might pass. And if she weren't too closely confronted with Leaf.

Suddenly, Bonnar felt that he couldn't stand any more of her. The situation was growing serious, reports that the Green Queen had shown herself down Stairs were increasing in number and detail with every hour. Time was valuable. But

right now, for now, he couldn't stand any more Auglinger. He'd have to have a rest from her, if it was only for a couple of hours .

"We'll have a recess," he said to the woman. "I'll call the guards."

"Oh." Her doughy face lit up. The only animation she had ever shown, from the first moment she had been brought to the Tower, the government fort in the center of Shalom, had come at the times he was dismissing her. "That will be nice."

The only animation? No, that wasn't entirely true, not quite fair to Auglinger. She *had* shown animation, interest, excitement ever, when it came to embroidering the robes she was to wear as queen. And she had done a beautiful job. All that was best in Caroline Auglinger came out in her embroidering.

She had embroidered a fantasy, pure and lovely, in tender shades of spring-like green. Jade, emerald, nephrite, and a dozen tones between, had been in her needle's palette. Between the fantastic shades of green she had set touches of turquoise and robin's egg blue. And finally there were flowers of a strange flat pinky beige. The robes of a queen. Even on Caroline herself they looked well. How would they have looked on Leaf?

Bonnar sighed. He pressed the buzzer. To the guards, when they entered, he said, "Take this lady to her rooms."

Meditatively he watched the queen-candidate's broad back as it retreated down the corridor. The idea of Caroline's robes had started a train of thought which it seemed somehow important to pursue. Her lack of animation, her interest in her embroidering . . .

Oh, now he had it, the idea that had been eluding him. It was the difficulty they had had with Caroline—their failure, finally—to make her believe that she was the Green Queen.

It had been decided, almost without argument, that she would give a better performance in her role if she were convinced that her role were true. The first visit to her narrow, crowded, ill-smelling Body-servants lodging had had the character of an Annunciation. The visitors—Bonnar had been among them—had bowed to her and addressed her reverentially. They had spoken to her in glowing terms of her future. And Caroline had looked at them slyly out of her doughy face with her flat eyes, and refused to believe.

They had tried hypnosis. For a moment Bonnar thought longingly of the psychological techniques of far-away Earth. On Earth, though it was legally forbidden, it was possible to mke anyone believe anything. But Viridis was, as a Rocke-

feller man had once said, two hundred years behind the times, and a backwater to boot. Hypnosis was very nearly all they had.

When hypnosis had failed, they had tried direct suggestion, argument, an veridical maskart. It had all been futile. Less suggestible as well as less intelligent than Leaf, Caroline had remained stubbornly aware that her betters were using her for their own ends.

Why had the hypnosis failed? The hypnotist himself had said that what they had been trying to get Caroline to believe conflicted too deeply with her picture of herself. Caroline saw herself as pitiable, wronged, weak, abused. (That she showed considerable aggressivness in marketing her sufferings did not change the pattern basically.) If she were the queen she would no longer be pitiable. So she could not believe that she was the queen.

But might there not be something else? An equally valid if less penetrating reason for her disbelief? Yes. Bonnar's lips tightened. Auglinger might refuse to believe that *she* was the Green Queen—*if she thought the Green Queen was somebody else.*

Oh. Bonnar remained standing for a moment, thinking. Then he buzzed Intelligence and gave instructions. Their gist was that while Caroline Auglinger was to be allowed free egress from the Tower, all her actions and contacts were to be carefully watched.

He sat down at his desk. From the big range of windows in front of him he had a view high up over the capital's broad, tree-lined streets. He could see nearly the whole city. He was an important man in the government now, with a suite of rooms almost at the top of the Tower. His days in verbal mask seemed to be over. Sometimes he felt a little lonely for them.

His rise had come about easily, naturally, and it appeared in retrospect, inevitably. At the "clarifying" interview he had used his surmises to answer the questions and to gather more information from what was asked. There had been other interviews with other more important persons. His old intimacy with Leaf had stood him in good stead; he had managed to parlay that, and what he had surmised and guessed, up into an insight that must have seemed almost uncanny to his questioners. In the end, he had had a complete, even detailed, knowledge of what the government feared, of what it had attemped and why it had failed. And when Leaf had disappeared, they had put him in charge of training anti-Leaf.

For a long time, he had learned, the tensions in Viridian social life had been increasing. Punitive measures against the the Lowers were

only temporarily effective; the sum total of Lower discontent always increased. (Discontent, not only with the precariousness of their lives, which one could understand, though not forgive, but also discontent with their own idleness and uselessness. *That,* as every Upper knew, was entirely the Lowers' own fault. They had a task in society to perform. They could perform it, if they only would.)

On the other hand, the number of Uppers—misguided, sentimental, or merely destructive—who wanted to make a basic change in Viridian society was increasing too. The government had reason to suspect that the cult of the Apple Pickers was a focus for people like these. It had seemed a brilliant, if possibly over-bold, idea to use the mask about the Green Queen that Bonnar had promulguated, to draw both groups—the rebellious Lowers and the reforming Uppers—out into the open where the government could sterilize the infection and deal with the dissidents radically. Yes, a brilliant idea. Bonnar had been impressed when he had learned about it. But it hadn't worked.

Leaf, of course, had been the heart of the plan. Green Queen, Mistress of Viridis in her own eyes, she was to have been in reality the government's puppet, or, more accurately, the government's judas sheep. (What would have become of her, Bonnar wondered, if the plan *had* worked? Would she have been allowed to go on living after she had led her docile followers into the government's grasp?) But only at first had she played the part assigned to her.

She had joined the Apple Pickers in her emotional reaction to Bonnar's breaking with her. She had passed the initiatory test triumphantly and had become genuinely interested in the teachings of the cult. (They were egalitarian and mystic, Bonnar understood. Somewhere on the surface of Viridis, the Apple Pickers believed, there was a wonderful tree whose fruit, given to all to eat, would make human beings so free and wise and good that they would be like gods. Such a teaching could easily be brought into harmony with Bonnar's mask about the Green Queen and her golden tree of life.) But the next step no one had been able to get Leaf to take. Odic, the government's spy in the Apple Pickers, had never been able to acquire any influence over her.

Odic. Seated at his desk high above Shalom, Bonnar permitted himself a sour smile. What genius, high in the council, had thought *Odic* could influence anyone? Odic was a typical KG, with the shambling gait, accusatory eye, and unattractive personality KGs always seemed to have. To imagine him

controlling Leaf was preposterous. But it was true that KGs were oddly apt to acquire influence over people who felt resentful. Their own intense resentment at having been KGs (cagees) seemed to act as a psychic bond with the others. Perhaps it had been assumed that Leaf would be feeling so resentful at Bonnar's desertion of her that Odic would be able to act on her.

Bonnar picked up the lastest sheaf of reports and riffled though them. They all dealt with Leaf's appearances below Stairs, the usual miracles. Levitation, healing a Lower who was almost dead with the lesions, cryptaesthesia. One dealt with a government agent's attempt to assassinate. He had failed. The reports were detailed and clear just as Bonnar had expected. He put them down again.

They brought up the question that always came to him in moments of quietness, the question he never could answer quite satisfactorily: *was* Leaf really the Green Queen?

He himself had made up the mask about the queen.

The Green Queen was the mother of Viridis, the source of all Viridian life. She had gone away when her creatures had been disobedient. But when she saw how much her children were suffering in her absence, she would come again. She would lower the barrier, make the surface of the planet habitable give all her offspring the fruit of the tree of life to eat. In the end, she would meet her divine consort beside the golden tree. The divine marriage would be consummated. And life on Viridis would be wonderful, paradise, a dream . . . .

He had made up the mask about the Green Queen himself.

No, Leaf couldn't be the queen. But that meant that there must be somebody behind the "supernatural" phenomena she was producing, somebody behind Leaf in the same way that he himself was behind Caroline. (Who had been behind Leaf when she had stopped the Felodon? H'm? He wasn't going to let himself think about that.)

Somebody behind Leaf would imply an organization, well-organized conspiracy, with scientific resources equal to those of the government. And Intelligence had never found a trace of anything like that. But what alternative was there?

An individual, supporting Leaf, manipulating her? But the "miracles" would be quite beyond the scope of an individual. And even if they weren't, who could the individual be? Horvendile had disappeared; the reports on Leaf mentioned many followers with her, but the only one who seemed to be consistently present was Odic. Odic was

a spy, a turncoat, a deserter. To imagine him as a cunning manipulator was ridiculous.

Could one of the big Foundations be supporting her? They were supposed never to intervene in domestic or planetary matters, but their studies, surveys and reports constituted in themselves a very considerable interference, as most practical politicians realized. Was it possible that one of the Foundations was going further and fomenting a revolution directly?

Possible, but unlikely. Surely Intelligence woud have discovered it.

Bonnar looked at his dial. There was a council meeting; he supposed he'd have to attend it. And then, more work with Auglinger.

He was, at this moment, one of the most powerful men in the government. It was odd how little satisfactions the knowledge brought.

* * *

It was late when he got back from the meeting. He switched on the lights in his office and looked about him, sighing. The meeting had been confused, nervous, unconstructive. The head of the secret police had expressed doubt about the reliability of some of his men. If . . . .

There was a new bunch of reports on his desk. Bonnar picked them up.

He had not read four words of the first one before he was pressing a button. His brows were knitted in a furious frown. His mouth was grim. He had rarely been so angry.

When Auglinger came he stood for a moment looking at her. Oh, the wide, soft body, the flat, doughy face! He began to talk.

"You couldn't offer to surrender to her freely, could you? To throw down the glove honestly. *That* would have been a matter of principle. No, you couldn't do that. You had to try to make money out of it."

Her fingers had gone to her mouth; she looked at him with scared, stupid eyes, and then away again.

"Such a little bit of money," Bonnar continued. "We heard most of your conversation, you know. The listener heard something about your robe. Are trying to sell them your robe?"

She winced. The shot had gone home. Had Caroline Auglinger really tried to include that too, in the deal she had wanted to make with the partisans of Leaf?

"Oh, I believe you would," Bonnar went on cruelly. "You'd sell your robe to the other queen, if you thought she'd pay for it. 'For sale, one robe, beautifully embroidered? Suitable for Green Queen?' Is that it? You'd sell your—"

A bell on Bonnar's desk rang clamorously. A red light had begun to flash. Hastily he jammed the

'phone to his ear.

After a few words his face grew dark. "Yes, yes," he said "Certainly . . . . yes."

He hung up. For a second he stood with his hands clasped together behind his back, his head lowered. "She's appeared above Stairs," he said to nobody in particular.

Auglinger gave a muffled gasp. Bonnar looked at her keenly. "You're to get dressed," he told her, "as quickly as possible, but carefully, in the queen's robes. Remember what I've tried to teach you. When you're dressed, the doctor will give you an injection of benz. Then you're to go to the Great Square.

"No, listen. I'm going with you. I'll have a receiver close behind your ear, and I'll tell you what to say and do. I'll also have a gun behind your back.

"Give a good performance, Mrs. Auglinger. Because if you give a bad one, I'll shoot you. I, or one of the men with me. We'll have nothing to lose by your death. Do you understand?"

Her face had gone pasty gray. She lowered her head. She would not meet his eyes. "Yes," she said.

They rode in a belocar to the edge of the square. Bonnar had had a small shot of benz himself. It pleased him to find that he didn't especially need it. As they shot through the yellow-lit night he felt an emotion that was almost exhilaration. After so much waiting and suspense, such nervous, breath-held maneuvering, it was a relief to have the prospect of action at last. However this night ended, the issue would be resolved at last.

The Great Square had always been something of an anomaly in Shalom. Presumably it had been built because the designer of the capital city had felt that a capital was incomplete without a great open-air meeting place. But the modest assemblages of Uppers and Body-servants that had been held in it had never filled it; its white durastone had always looked a little empty and forlorn. Now in the glare of the yellow flood lights not only the short flights of steps around the square were packed with people, but almost the entire floor. Volunteers (partisans of Leaf?) kept pushing people back from the tiny raised area at one end that was the speaker's dais. Even while Bonnar watched, the defensive line bulged and broke, and black dots spilled out over the pavement. But a moment later the line had reformed itself further out in the square.

There was a speaker on the dais. From the strange loose gestures and rough unintoned voice Bonnar guessed that it was Odic, even before he picked him up in the field

glasses. Bonnar's party was too far from the dais for him to get more than a word now and then of Odic's speech, but the KG seemed to be talking about his childhood in the glass cage, his misery, his isolation, his despair. It seemed a strange topic on which to address a crowd that was waiting for a sight of the Green Queen, but perhaps there was some reason in it. Many people on Viridis, Lowers especially, had felt the emotions Odic described.—No KG would ever admit that his asceptic rearing in the leaded glass of the cage could have been motived by a mistaken regard for his welfare, a desire to protect him completely from radioactivity. One and all, KGs were passionately convinced that they had been treated as they had out of gloating, sadistic cruelty.

Caroline Auglinger plucked at Bonnar's sleeve. "What are we going to do?" she asked in a thready whisper.

There was no reason why she shouldn't know. "We're going into that house," Bonnar said. He indicated a darkly looming structure behind him. It was distant almost the length of the square from the dais where Odic stood. "Do you see that topmost balcony? You and I are going out on that,"

"Oh."

Bonnar sent men into the house. There were voices, protests, soft cries. Once there was a thud like the noise a club makes hitting flesh. In a little while one of Bonnar's men came back to say that the house had been evacuated.

Bonnar and anti-Leaf went into the house, up, out on the balcony. At this height they could hear Odic's voice more clearly, though the crowd seemed black and anonymous as ants. The door behind them from the balcony into the house was guarded by Bonnar's men. They would help, too, when the moment came.

Odic seemed to be getting near the end of his speech. "I felt that I had lost my soul," he boomed. "I was desperate." He made a wide, flapping gesture. KGs always suffered from impaired space perception. "I became a spy for the government. I hated everybody. And then I found my queen, the Green Queen. Queen Leaf.

"How can I tell you how it feels to get your soul back, to be human? I won't attempt to describe it. You shall see. Queen Leaf!"

He had finished. He clambered down awkwardly from the dais. Nobody else moved. The dais stood vacant. Then a woman appeared on it.

Where had she come from? It was stagecraft, of course; Leaf, after all, had been an apprentice in Veridical. Bonnar had a trick or two up his sleeve himself that he

had taken over from Veridical. But it had been wonderfully managed, very effective. Almost like a miracle.

The woman, of course, was Leaf. But was woman quite the right word? It was odd what an impression of majesty, almost divinity, she gave. Bonnar fumbled with his field glasses and brought her pale face up close. He was relieved to find how much like the old Leaf she still was.

She was smiling a little. She stood quite motionless for a moment. Bonnar had time to notice how simple her green robe was, how unlike the heavy impressiveness of what Caroline had embroidered for herself. Then Leaf began to speak.

It was a simple speech. Afterward Bonnar couldn't remember the words she had used. She told them that they were unhappy, that she had come to help them, that she would lower the barrier. They need be afraid no longer. She was the Green Queen. She would give them the fruit of her tree to eat.

Yes, it was a simple speech.

The thousands in the square were utterly silent. People seemed to have stopped breathing. Then a clear voice on the edge of the crowd—it must have been a child's voice it was so young and pure—said, "Are you really the Green Queen?"

"Yes," answered Leaf.

Oh, if he had been able to teach Caroline Auglinger to speak like that! Dignity, and simplicity, and the compelling force of utter truth! For, whatever the case might really be, there was no doubt in this moment that Leaf deeply believed that she was the queen. Bonnar himself had felt a thrill that was almost surrender to belief pass over him at her words.

The thousands in the crowd gave in to it utterly. A long, low murmur went up from them. It sounded lazy and relaxed, almost somnolent. Then its pitch began to rise. Isolated shouts were heard.

It was time. Already Bonnar had delayed unduly. Already people nearest the dais were falling on their knees.

He picked up the speaker that connected with the little receiver behind Caroline Auglinger's ear, and spoke into it. "Now," he said.

Caroline Auglinger moved forward to the edge of the balcony. She had had a heavy shot of benz, and her movements were completely steady and controlled. As she moved forward Bonnar's men turned a floodlight on her and brought Veridical projectors and lenses into focus, and after a moment she seemed to be standing in a pool of fresh, spring-like light against a background of young trees.

Heads began to turn toward her. During the last part of Odic's

speech Bonnar's men had hooked amplifiers around on the walls of the houses with the balconies. Everybody in the square would be able to hear her. "Start talking," Bonnar said into the speaker.

Anti-Leaf's hands were gripping the rail of the balcony tightly. She hesitated, licking her lips, for a fraction of a second. Then, "She is not the Green Queen," she said.

It was not quite what she had been supposed to say, but it would do well enough. And her voice, through the amplifiers, had lost the faint edge of querulousness it usually had. "Go on," Bonnar prodded.

"She is not the Green Queen at all," Caroline repeated. "I am the Queen. That woman is lying to you. She is a trickster. She wants to trick you out of my tree and its fruit."

Heads were turning back and forth. The crowd was making comparisons between Leaf and anti-Leaf. That could be dangerous. Bonnar spoke into the microphone hastily.

"She has a man with her who confesses he was a spy," Caroline said. "Odic, his name is. Let him come forward to me."

Again, it was not quite what Auglinger had been supposed to say. Bonnar frowned. The exact words were important, because they were keyed in with the veridical effects he had meant to produce. Was Caroline making these mistakes because she was nervous and frightened? Or was it something else?

Down at the far end of the square, around the speaker's dais the crowd was stirring. A man leaped up on the platform, beside Leaf. He seemed about to tumble off again, but he maintained his balance, though precariously. It was Odic.

"I'll come!" he bellowed. "I'll come and face you down! This is a plot, a trick!"

He jumped down from the platform. Bonnar already had him in the field of vision of his glasses. As Odic moved slowly toward them, the people giving way in front of him and closing in behind Bonnar pressed a button and turned a stud. Keys and tumblers began to fall in. His previously recorded veridical mask roll began to play.

It had been prepared very carefully. Bonnar's chief trouble with the mask makers had been to keep them from turning out something "effective," something theatrical and spectacular. Bonnar had insisted on an Odic only a little exaggerated, a little caricatured. The projected Odic moved a little more uncouthly than the real one, a little more loose-lipped and slack-jawed. But the difference made the flesh creep.

The projection, of course, was

not one hundred percent coordinated with the man. It could not be, in the nature of things. But as Odic pushed his way across the square to the balcony on which Caroline Auglinger was standing, a low murmur of repulsion went up from the people next to him.

So far, so good. Bonnar broke into a weak sweat of relief. If this kept on Leaf might, after all, be defeated. Rather hesitatingly he pressed another button in the range of those on the belt around his waist.

It should have surrounded Odic with an aura of sinister, faintly purplish light, silhouetted his uncouth movements against a lurid, faintly yellowish grow. What really happened was that, on the instant, the pavement under Odic's feet was replaced by the quaking soil of a Viridian marsh. Newts slithered away from his advancing feet. In a clump of coarse-stranded marsh grass near him the discarded tail-segment of a Crotalidus rattled ominously.

Oh, the fools! Somebody had keyed in the wrong roll to that control. Or was it deliberate sabotage? Bonnar switched off the projection on the instant, but some damage had already been done. Some one laughed. "Maskart!" a voice said jeeringly. "Does the other queen think she'll fool us with maskart?"

Odic had reached the balcony. He stood before it looking upward. "You are not the queen," he said. His voice was meant to be noble, but it had the unpleasant quality of a deaf person's Odic, like other KGs, had hardly heard a human voice until he was six. "You are false, a liar. I throw your falsity in your face."

Caroline Auglinger threw her head back. For a moment she looked almost majestic. "I will not exchange words with you," said she. "You acknowledge openly that you are a traitor, that you have been a spy. For people like you there can be only punishment. Here it is."

She stretched out her right hand. While she had been speaking, Bonnar had given the light surrounding her a reddish tinge. Against that background a long, bright spark shot out from her hand.

It was aimed at Odic, but it died away before it could quite touch him. None the less, its effect on him was remarkable and, as far as Bonnar was concerned, unexpected. Odic's jaw dropped. He looked surprised and a little annoyed, as if he were going to sneeze. His knees bent. He stood for a moment, swaying. Then he collapsed sideways on the pavement of the square. He made a kicking motion and was still.

"He is dead," announced Caroline Auglinger. (Bonnar was not cueing her.)" So all will die who

oppose the true Green Queen."

The crowd restlessly. The scene it had just witnessed had been dramatic, thrilling, and somehow unconvincing. There was a moment of silence. Then, from the far end of the square, Leaf spoke.

"You are not dead, Odic," she said. Her voice was perfectly audible even at that distance. "It's an—arrangement you've made with her, isn't it? Sit up. I won't buy her robe."

There was a pause. Then Odic got stumblingly to his feet. His whole long, hobbledehoy body looked ashamed. "I did it for you," he mumbled sheepishly.

"Did you think that I couldn't revive you if you were really dead?" Leaf asked. "So you pretended, you made an arrangement with her to magnify my power. It wasn't necessary, Odic."

Her attention turned to Caroline who was standing as if frozen, her hands clutching the rail of the balcony. "I can see the rods and wires under your robe," said Leaf, "and the man who is standing behind you with a gun. You are not happy on the balcony, you would rather be at home with your embroidery. I do not know what will become of you. But tell me. Don't you, in your heart, know that I am really the Queen?"

"Yes," answered Auglinger.

She had spoken quickly, involuntarily, before Bonnar could dissuade or prompt her. The word had scarcely left her mouth before she realized what she had done. Her fingers went to her lips. She turned toward Bonnar and then cowered away from him again. "Don't—don't—" she said. Please don't! I'll say anything you want me to say!" She made a wild defensive gesture with her hands. In her frenzy of motion, her long, heavy, embroidered sleeve caught on one of the rods beneath her dress. She pulled against it desperately, still shrieking. Caroline Auglinger had always been inept. To the onlookers it must have seemed that Bonnar fired at her and killed her. What really happened was that, with the aid of the robe she had embroidered, she electricuted herself.

She fell heavily against the railing of the balcony. For a moment it seemed that she would overbalance and go crashing down to the pavement below. Then she collapsed on the inside.

CHAPTER 5

"SHE'S a fake," Bonnar said aggressively. His resolute gaze traveled around the council room. His colleagues sat with lowered heads, unwilling, or afraid, to meet his eyes. But they wanted to believe him, they would believe him. He'd see that they believed.

The conference was being held on the highest floor of the Tower, so high that the pop and rattle of gunfire below was almost inaudible. They were directly under the highest part of the dome. For a moment Bonnar wondered what it would be like to live out on the surface of a planet, without either dome or barrier. The air would be fresh, there might be more food. But Tinsley was saying something. Bonnar forced his mind back to the business in hand.

" . . . If she's nothing but a fake," Tinsley finished, "how do you account for her miracles?"

"Tricks. Maskart. Easily explainable," Bonnar answered positively.

A sigh of relief went up from the gathering.

"Ill explain," Bonnar continued "Some of you, I gather, were rather disturbed by Miss Amadeus' being able to 'see' the rods hidden under our late queen-candidate's robes. You argued that such perception on her part must imply super-normal powers.

"Of course, it means no such thing. Viridis, because of the way in which it was colonized, has always been peculiarly subject to what I may call theological credulity. All of you are familiar with the history of the Jovis migraton and its slogan, 'Jovis is a first-class God.' The high degree of adaptation of Viridian plant and animal life was supposed to be explained by the intercession of Jovis, who had the planet under his special care. But perhaps you don't realize how much of the credulity that inspired the migration still remains with us, how all-too-ready we are to call what we don't understand a miracle.

"The easiest explanation for Miss Amadeus' knowledge of the rods is not that she possesses some form of cryptaesthesia. It is that Auglinger herself told Odic, in the interview in which she offered to sell out to Miss Amadeus, about the existence of the rods."

Bonnar halted. They were listening attentively. Fairfield was nodding his head slowly, as if he were beginning to be convinced. Yes, his speech was making an effect on them.

"And so on with the other 'miracles.' Miss Amadeus is a shrewd psychologist. A Lower, covered with pustules, comes to her to be healed. There are clever stage effects, a refined use of maskart, everything to conduce to an atmosphere of unquestioning belief. Miss Amadeus lays her hands on the Lower. Suddenly, he feels much better; we all know how effective mental attitude can be in securing a temporary arrest of radiation disease. And another 'miracle' has occured.

"Yes, the young lady is a fake. I am far from saying that she is a conscious and deliberate one; I believe she is self-deceived. According to her dossier card, she actually does possess some degree of ESP. But she is not the Green Queen. There is no Green Queen."

Bonnar looked around him again. He read conviction on almost every face. The place at the head of the council table, that ought to have been filled by Igon, the blue-uniformed head of the secret police was empty. Igon had killed himself (or been killed by his subordinates —details in the report of his death could be interpreted in either way) shortly after Leaf's triumph in the Great Square. Now his organization was being reorganized. Bonnar would use all his influence to see that, when it reappeared, it would operate under strict council control. An autonomous secret police had no place in his scheme of things.

Tinsley was speaking again. ". . . .I don't think any of us seriously thinks that Miss Amadeus is actually the queen. But the point I was trying to make remains. Most of the city has gone over to her. It would be almost accurate to say that what remains of the legitimate government of Viridis is under siege in the Tower." He showed his teeth at Bonnar.

Bonnar nodded. "Our friend Tinsley is quite right. Indeed, the situation is even more serious than he has indicated. I have here a report —" he picked up the sheet and showed it to them—" which I believe to be well-documented and reliable. You must prepare for a shock . . . . It asserts that in the very near future Miss Amadeus will actually lower the barrier."

There was an instant of blank silence. Then they all began to talk at once. "I didn't think she—" "The woman's insane!" "Doesn't she realize—" "She'll kill us all." "Kill us all!" "Everyone in Shalom will die if she lowers the barrier!"

Bonnar cut across the babble of voices. "I see you realize how serious this is. There is only one way to stop the pro-queen forces. The movement would collapse completely if she were to die."

Fairfield was frowning. "I understand a number of assassination attempts have been made on her before."

"That's correct," Bonnar answered. "Five attempts, in fact. Four of them were detected before the gun could be fired or the knife used. In the fifth attempt our agent went over to her."

"If that's the case, I don't see how we could expect yet another attempt to be successful."

Bonnar smiled. "How were our attempts detected? Notice the means used—guns, or a knife."

"I'm afraid I don't get any en-

lightenment out of your observation," Fairfield said after a short silence.

"Guns and knives are both metal," Bonnar explained with a faintly patient air. "The answer is obvious. Someone in Miss Amadeus' entourage has an imported metal detector!"

"Then you plan to put her out of the way with something that isn't metal?"

"Yes. We will use a glass knife."

His tone should have dismissed them, but they were too curious. Nobody moved that the meeting be adjourned. Tinsley coughed. "I don't suppose you mean that about the knife quite literally, do you, Bonnar?"

"No."

Tinsley coughed again. "Then perhaps you'd better go into your plan a little. You'll want council approval of it, you know."

Bonnar flushed. He had been placed in charge of the anti-Leaf project; he had never been removed; there was no reason to think he would need council authorization for his plan. But they were looking at him curiously and a little doubtfully. Until his position was a little surer, he would need their cooperation.

"I'll be glad to explain," he said cordially. (Mentally he moved Tinsley's name to the top of his grudge list and underscored it. He would deal with Tinsley as soon as he possibly could.) "As you know, fungus disease has been a constant problem, not only to our Body-servants, but even to a few Uppers. For four or five years, at least, there has been a council-sponsored research project working on this. In considering this—ah—difficulty with Miss Amadeus, I consulted with the project heads. And I found that in the course of their research they have bred a strain of fungus which is fatal to laboratory animals within thirty seconds. There is no reason to think it would behave any differently with a human being."

"And you plan to kill her with that? With a glass knife, in the sense of a glass test-tube?"

"Yes."

Fairfield frowned doubtfully. "It seems to me that such a virulent form of fungus disease might be a considerable danger to *us*."

Bonnar felt a thrill of temptation. It would be easy to let Fairfield and the others argue him into abandoning the test-tube idea. It might hurt Bonnar's prestige a little, but only a little. And then Leaf—No. He'd gone too far to turn back. His future depended on it.

"I don't believe so," he answered. "The fungus is strictly a laboratory production, in the sense that it could not survive under natural

conditions. In a stoppered test-tube, in an atmosphere of nitrogen under two pressures, it will live indefinitely. But once it is released into the open air, it must find a host immediately, or die."

"I don't see how that keeps it from being dangerous to us," said Fairfield.

"Don't you?" Bonnar answered pleasantly. "The point is that, in a normal atmosphere, the fungus can survive for only a few seconds outside the tissues of a living host. Since it kills the host almost as quickly as a lightning stroke would, that means that there is not much more than four or five seconds, at most, during which contact with an infected person is dangerous. Only in case someone went to Miss Amadeus' aid at the very moment when she collapsed could he be infected. Do you understand?"

"Yes . . . How does the fungus work?"

Bonnar swallowed. "It sends hyphae down the foramina of the skin. Death occurs because the blood vessels are choked by the growth of enormous masses of mycelium."

"One more question," said Tinsley. He put his finger tips together. "I don't suppose that failing in this assassination attempt would make our position any worse than it already is. But I'd like to point out to our friend Bonnar that any agent we send against the Gr—I mean, Miss Amadeus, now, is very likely indeed to go over to her. Who is going to wield the glass knife?"

Bonnar hesitated. An alarm bell was ringing in his brain. He knew perfectly well that an executive who cannot delegate responsibility, who insists on doing all his own dirty work himself, forfeits the respect of his associates. But the temptation to astound them, to make Tinskey look cheap, was irresistable. "The glass knife? I am," he said.

* * *

Getting out of the Tower was difficult. It was besieged by people who, if they did not quite warrant the title of fanatics, were resolute, vigilant, and incorruptible. Bonnar pored over maps and plans of the building fruitlessly. In the end, he had the oldest of the Tower Body-servants brought to him, a man so antique that he had been toothless as an egg for nearly thirty years. He was almost sixty, an incredible age for a Body-servant.

At first Bonnar had trouble in making him understand what he wanted. When the old man at last comprehended, he was pessimistic and discouraging. There was no way out of the Tower except those shown on the maps, and they were all guarded from both sides. It couldn't be done.

Bonnar, again ignoring the tem-

ptation to give up, kept after him. At last the old man grew pettish. "How do you expect me to think?" he said crossly. "I'm hungry all the time. Nobody can think who's always hungry."

Bonnar restrained an impulse to chastise him. "We are all hungry," he said with dignity. "I am hungry too. After we win and the legitimate government is back in power, food from the automatic farms will start coming in again. We may even lay out some new farms."

The old man laughed. "Even before the lady came, *we* didn't get enough food. Some Body-servants are hungry all their lives . . . Well." He rubbed his lip and mumbled. Bonnar waited patiently. "There used to be a sort of manhole that went out under the walls. If you don't mind a way out that's uncomfortable and pretty dangerous."

"Dangerous? How?"

"Radiation. It goes pretty deep down in the soil, and it's not lead lined."

Bonnar felt a surge of the profound, almost instinctive horror that the idea of unshielded contact with the soil of Viridis always aroused in natives of the planet. He had to inhale and swallow before he could reply. "Show me the manhole or whatever it is. I'm willing to risk it."

They went down in an elevator (the Tower had its own supply of electricity, and its elevators were still running) to the sub-basement. The Body-servant raised a trap in the floor and led Bonnar down a flight of steep, narrow stairs. They stood in a small, square room.

"This is the last of the shielded part," the old man said. He peered about him, blinking uncertainly. "I think it's here . . . No. No. It's over here."

He went to one of the walls and fiddled with screws. Nothing happened. "You'll have to help me," he said at last to Bonnar.

Bonnar flushed with anger, but he pulled where the servant told him to. It was hard work; finally a section of the wall about three feet square came out, to show a round, black, uninviting opening.

"It's like a tunnel," the old man said, "but most of the time I guess it's too small to crawl in."

"How long is it?" Bonnar demanded. His heart was thudding dreadfully.

"I don't know. Long. I think it comes out this side of the Great Square."

He'd have to do it, Bonnar decided, or at least try it. But he'd always had a touch of claustrophobia; the thought of the black, poisonous passage sickened him.

"Why was it built?" he asked.

The old man shrugged. "Something about the migration. Maybe it was a place of refuge in the per-

secutions."

He'd make himself do it. They'd all be dead tomorrow if he didn't. But he didn't think he could make himself do it without a protective suit.

* * *

The tunnel was not so bad at first. Bonnar felt reasonably safe inside his suit, and he had had a stiff shot of benz before starting out. The test-tube—the glass knife—was strapped next to his skin just above the hip bone of his left side. The technician had assured him over and over again that the complicated release mechanism on the tube made accidental premature release of the fungus absolutely impossible. The torch in his right hand gave a bright, reassuring light.

But how narrow the tunnel was! Through the happy haze of indifference and optimism the benz had given him, Bonnar felt a recurrent wisp of fright brush him at its narrowness. As the old man had said, most of the time the tunnel was too small to allow the ease of crawling; Bonnar had to worm his way along in it.

He was sweating heavily inside the suit. The paint the make-up specialists had used then they had applied his realistic-looking ulcers (Bonnar was going to masquerade as a Lower once he was out of the tunnel) was waterproof. But would it be proof against all the sweating he was doing? His body itched with sweat.

For a little while he was able to crawl. He had come a long way. Then the tunnel narrowed suddenly. He had to lie flat on his belly and writhe forward inch by painful inch. Remotely at first, and then with a growing sense of nearness, the question came to him; if the tunnel got too narrow for him to go forward, would he be able to work his way back?

He pushed his doubt aside. But the effect of benz is apt to wear off without warning. Bonnar had wriggled his way well under a bulging overhang of the tunnel roof when he was suddenly coldly and nakedly aware of what his situation was.

He couldn't go forward; he would never be able to get the bulky air tank on his shoulders past the overhang of the tunnel. Could he go back? He didn't think he could. To get as far as he was now, he had had to work his way past half a dozen places where only the light of the torch had enabled him to know which shoulder to depress, which knee to move. He might be able to writhe backward for fifty or seventy-five feet before he would tug and strain and pull, and nothing would happen. Seventy-five feet of painful motion. And then he'd be caught.

He was caught now, with slow

death waiting him from the long, poisonous, somehow elastic embrace of the tunnel, and quick death—the glass knife—strapped ineluctably to his side.

Horror shook him. He gave a gasp. It turned into a scream. In an instant he was screaming uncontrolably.

His screams echoed inside his helmet so loudly that they hurt his ears. As the screams went on he had moments of odd, hallucinatory pity for them. They were trapped inside his helmet, just as he was trapped inside the tunnel, and neither he nor the screams could get out.

He stopped at last and lay exhausted, sobbing weakly, his face pressed against the cheek-piece of his helmet and saliva running in a long thick strand down over his mouth.

Slowly composure, wincing and precarious, returned to him. There was, after all, a way out of a lengthy dying. He still had the glass knife.

His hand moved toward it. Then he thought, I might be able to get past the overhang of the tunnel . . . if I were out of my suit.

It was a struggle like a dying man's struggle for air to get out of the suit. The catches worked all wrong; the suit had never been designed to be removed by a man lying on his belly in a tunnel like a grave shaft. Sometimes as he strained and wrenched at the tough lead-impregnated fabric he wondered he was fighting for life or for death. How long could he live without the protection of the suit?

He left the discarded suit lying behind him, a solid plug in the length of the passage. Now that he was out of it he had a strange and not displeasing sense of bodily lightness, of easy, almost slippery, mobility. The tunnel surface beneath him was smooth and moist and the air, though earth-smelling, was fresh enough, —Of course, what he was afraid of in the air had no smell.

The tunnel broadened. He crawled forward for what seemed a long time. Suddenly a faint breath of air in motion touched his cheek.

Instantly he switched off his torch. The draught of air meant he must be getting near the end of the tunnel, and he did not want anyone to see light coming out of the ground.

Utter blacknesss settled down. It had been late at night when he started, and he did not know how long he had been in the tunnel, but Viridian nights were always bright; the heavy darkness indicated that the opening to the tunnel was shaded or covered in some way. But there must be an opening. He clung to the thought. His limbs were shaking with relief.

The draught of air was stronger now. He put his fingers across the globe of the torch and flashed the light briefly. Yes, it was the end of the tunnel, as he had thought. It slanted up to the surface not two feet ahead of him, but a heavy tree root was growing across the opening.

It wasn't going to stop him, he would let it. He crawled to the obstruction and began digging around it with his hands. He tried to be quiet, but in a little while he was working in a sort of frenzy.

It was nearly dawn when he got out. He had come up in the midst of a clump of thick trees; his body bore long scratches from the rough surface of the roots. Where was he, anyway? Oh, yes, Tandis Park. As the old Lower in the Tower had said, it wasn't far from the square.

He had done it, got away from the siege. But he was worn out. He'd have to rest, sleep a little maybe. Before he killed Leaf. The thought sickened him; hadn't he loved her? But the fear of what she was doing overrode all that. It was a terrible fear.

He felt above his hip bone anxiously. He still had the glass knife. She had to be killed, or a civilization— and himself—died!

It was seven or eight in the morning before he emerged from the clump of trees. The painted pustles and ulcers of his disguise had stood up wonderfully well, and the dirt and scratches he had picked up in the tuneladded realism.

He hailed a passing Lower and asked him where he could find the Green Queen. In the Renfrew Palace, the man told him, adding, with an appraising look at Bonnar's sores, "You look like you could use some help from the Lady."

Bonnar thanked him and started limpingly off in the direction of the Palace. One hurdle had been passed successfully; he had spoken to a Lower, and neither his speech nor his garb had given him away.

The Renfrew Palace had been built by James Renfrew, the leader of the first wave of the triple Jovis migration. It was a big flat building with a snouted, curved Chinese roof, and a quite un-Chinese emphasis on the vertical elements below it. Early as the hour was, the wide vermillion doors of the palace were open, and a long line stretched away from it and down the street. Bonnar took his place at the end of the line.

He looked at the people in front of him. Lowers, mostly, with a Body-servant or two. Most of them had pustules and ulcers, sometimes quite spectacular, and all of them looked wan and sick. Immediately in front of Bonnar a man and a woman were standing. The man held a baby in his arms, and it cried continually.

The line moved forward steadily and at a fair speed. Bonnar felt an intense nervous apprehension. His throat was dry. He had to keep swallowing. Perhaps he should have had something to eat, and rested a little longer, before undertaking . . . . But every minute's delay increased the risk of detection. And it was quite in character for him, as a Lower, to look faint and weak.

The line moved forward steadily. Along the sidewalk, up the steps, through the doors. Into a hall. Bonnar, among the tatters of his kilt, fumbled with the elaborate release mechanism of the test-tube. Through the hall. Into a room. And there Leaf was.

She was wearing a simple green robe that followed the lines of her body closely, and her dark red hair was loose about her shoulders. The faint bluish nimbus that flickered around her head was undoubtedly a piece of stagecraft; but Bonnar had a moment of genuine shock when he saw that her sandaled feet were not resting on the polished floor. She seemed to be floating some two inches above it. Magnets, magnets of course. (What sort of magnet?) Magnets.

The line moved toward her. Leaf's technique in dealing with those who had come for her help was simple. She spoke a few words to them, in a voice so soft that Bonnar couldn't hear what she was saying. Sometimes she would smile a little. Then she passed her hands lightly above the surfaces of their bodies, not touching them.

Simple, but wonderfully effective. The ulcers seemed to lose their dusky color and began to granulate. The bowed bodies straightened, the shrivelled skins filled out and assumed a healthy flush. Faith-healing, of course. But a wonderful thing.

The moment Bonnar had been dreading came. He stood in front of Leaf, the test-tube in his hand. Its gray flocculence was hidden by his fingers. He fumbled with the last twist of the releasing mechanism. He kept his eyes down.

Leaf said quietly, "Bonnar, did you really think you could make yourself kill me like that?

* * *

Horribly startled, he looked up. His heart was thudding like a hammer, shaking his whole body. Leaf was smiling rather sadly at him.

"You—yes!" he cried. "I can. I will." He wrenched wildly at the test-tube's cap.

Leaf shook her head. "You cannot. While you were waiting in the line, your fingers broke the release mechanism. You cannot evaculate the tube now."

With shaking hands he raised the tube close to his eyes and examined it. He pressed the trigger hard.

Nothing happened. She was right.

"I'll—break it!" he panted.

"It would do no good. The culture is dead. Look at it," Leaf said.

Trembling, he obeyed her. And she was right again, the deadly gray flocculence within the test-tube had changed to a slimy, fluid green.

"I killed it," Leaf said. "I can kill by looking, you know. Don't you understand, yet, Bonnar? You made up a mask about the Green Queen. But the mask is true; not a mask, but reality. I am the Queen."

He stared at her for a moment, his mind a whirlpool, a swaying chaos of belief and disbelief. Words came to his lips; he babbled something, he didn't know what. She was still smiling at him, sadly and a little tenderly.

A moment longer he stared at her, torn by doubt and a growing will to believe. Then a great wave of conviction swept over him. He could not stand against it. He surrendered to it, to an extraordinary happiness. The test tube fell from his fingers. With a cry of rapture he threw himself at her feet.

CHAPTER 6

"I cannot sleep," Leaf was saying. She pressed her hand over her eyes wearily. "I've been awake all night, and it is nearly morning. It is strange, isn't it? I am the Queen. And yet I cannot sleep."

Bonnar had sprung to his feet the instant she came out on the balcony. He had been sleeping there, across the entrance to her rooms, guarding it. Ever since that morning in the Renfrew Palace he had clung to her—from devotion, from awe and reverence, and a little from a half-unconscious belief that clinging to her would in the long run be to his benefit. He had clung to her, and she had tolerated him.

She advanced to the edge of the balcony. Shalom lay at her feet; after her triumph she had taken a suite at the very top of the Tower, beside the council room. The moon-bright night radiance filled the sky; only scattered lights were showing in the streets. The city scarcely seemed to breathe.

"How the city has changed in the last three days," she said musingly "Was it only three days ago, Bonnar, that I let down the barrier? Yes, only three days. I had them break the big barrier projecting screens—there was no other way to shut it off—and for the first time in a hundred years the barrier around Shalom was down. Some people were frightened, but most of them welcomed it. They danced in the streets, they were so glad. Nobody slept that night."

Bonnar said nothing. He had been tormented by inner doubts at

the time, despite his faith in the Queen; but Leaf had broken down the barrier and, it was true, nothing disastrous had happened.

"Next day, they went streaming out of the city," Leaf continued. "They knew there was a Jansen settlement near Shalom; they were going to live in the houses and till the soil. Being Lowers, they weren't afraid of radiation damage. The barrier had never given *them* much protection, and they knew I was going to make the unprotected surface habitable. Now they're straggling back, saying they're hungry. There isn't any food . . . I wish I could sleep." Once more she laid her hand over her eyes.

Something in the way she said the last words brought memory flooding up in Bonnar. He remembered—no, was ready to re-live—the days when she had been a woman and he had been her lover. She couldn't sleep; but if he were to take her by the hand and lead her back into the bed-chamber, lie down by her, enjoy her . . . . He knew how to give her sleep.

Leaf moved, and the dim blue nimbus flickered restlessly about her. Bonnar was shaken with shame and disgust. How could he have thought what he had been thinking? She was the Queen; he was someone she tolerated, as she might have tolerated a too-devoted dog. Had she been listening to his thoughts? She would hate him if she had. She had turned away; he could not see her face.

"You have many cares, Lady," he said in a submissive murmur. "It is no wonder that you cannot sleep."

"Cares? Oh, yes." She put her two hands on the rail of the balcony and leaned out over it. "What has happened to my friends?" she asked almost plaintively. "I used to have friends! Now all I have is followers. The world is divided into the few who still hate me, and those who throw themselves at my feet. Isn't there anyone left who merely wishes me well? Horvendile . . . ."

Bonnar felt a pang of jealous curiosity whose strength astonished him. For a moment all he could do was to bite his lips. At last he was able to say, in a carefully controlled voice, "Yes, Lady? Horvendile?"

"Horvendile wanted to be king," Leaf answered. "He tried to tamper with the myth."

She halted. He could see her, against the glow of the sky, pushing back the mass of her hair with one hand. "Horvendile showed me who I am. He taught me many things. I suppose . . . .I suppose that I am grateful to him. But he wanted to be my consort, to sit beside me on the throne. I caught him bribing Lowers to tell me another version

of the myth, one that would have room in it for *him*. It was not just ambition. But after that I had to send him away."

So that was what had happened to Horvendile. Bonnar felt a burst of relief. The sandy-haired little historian, at least, was out of the way, done for as far as Leaf went.

"You spoke of cares," Leaf was saying. "Food is the great one. The Lowers must have more food. Even before I can make Viridis fit to live on, I must feed them.

"I have been trying to get more aglal from the automatic sun-tank farms. I don't know how successful . . . . I am to hear a report on it in the council today."

She looked about her, sighing. There was a streak of faint greenish light in the sky that began to dim the lunar shining. "I must try to sleep," she said. "It will be morning in a little while."

"Yes, lady," Bonnar said. He bowed deeply, bending forward from the waist. "Sleep well. I wish you sleep."

She went in, closing the balcony door behind her. For a moment Bonnar looked after her. Then he lay down in front of the threshold. He would guard her, whether or not she slept.

* * *

Even an absolute monarch must have a council to advise, ministers to govern through. Leaf sat with her bent head resting on her doubled fist, gravely listening to Tinsley's report on the automatic farms. "So," she said when he had finished, "it will be at least six months before I can expect any significant increase in algal production from the farms?"

Tinsley (she had coopted him from the old Upper cabinet; he had, it seemed, long been a secret sympathizer of hers) nodded soberly. "That is so, my Lady. Even with the new tanks you have ordered, it will be six months before the supply of non-polluted algal will be especially larger. Polluted food is in plentiful supply as usual, of course."

"I can't give them polluted food," Leaf said, as if to herself.

There was an instant's silence. Then Odic struggled to his feet. "Lady! My Lady!" He croaked. He made one of his big flapping gestures. "May I have your gracious permission to speak?"

"Yes, Odic."

Odic turned red and stammered. He sawed the air with his hands. He seemed to be strangling with emotion, with sincerity. "Lady." he said when he had at last succeeded in pushing words past the block in his throat, "Lady, I want to warn you. You must be on your guard.

"I am an Upper. By birth I am kin to the best of the Uppers. Only

the finest lineage was considered precious enough to merit the protection of the cage." Odic's mouth twisted in a burst of bitterness. He stopped to choke and cough.

"As I say, I am an Upper," he continued. "So, though they know I belong to you, I hear things. Lady, they are plotting against you. Be on your guard."

Leaf was unimpressed. She did not lift her head from the hand that was propping it. "That is nothing new," she answered. "I can look into men's hearts."

"Yes, but Lady, you have the Lowers to fear also. Do you not understand about people like that? So long as they are held down they are pitiable. But when they become free they are full of hate. People who have suffered as much as they have are always bad."

"Already they talk against you. Already there is muttering in the streets. If you fail them, they will tear you in pieces. Lady, forgive me." Odic clasped his hands together before his face and gave her one of his wild, supplicating glances. "But do you intend to give them unpolluted food, make the surface of Viridis habitable?"

"Yes, Odic."

"Forgive me! But, Lady, how?"

The question seemed to reverberate in the air. Queen Leaf hesitated. It was not that she was in any degree shaken; but she seemed to hesitate. Bonnar sprang to his feet.

"My Lady, Queen Leaf," he said in a tone that was heavy with a perfectly sincere respect. "I am not even a council member. I live only at your will. But may I speak?"

"Who—? Oh, it's Bonnar." Queen Leaf had, he perceived, forgotten the man who had been sitting at her feet. "Speak, then. But be brief."

They were all looking at him—whispering, identifying him as a man who had been important in the old government and gone over at the spectacular last moment to the Green Queen. Bonnar was not displeased. He turned to Odic.

"Who are you," he demanded, "to ask your Queen questions? "Are you her equal? She is the Queen, and she is not accountable to anyone— to *anyone*—for what she does not do. Not to the Lowers" — here Bonnar laughed—" or to you, Odic."

He turned to the Queen before the former KG could answer. "My Lady," he said, speaking with his head respectfully bowed, "it is not that you should be vexed by discontented Lowers. People like that are never satisfied. If they talk against you, they must be stopped.

"The old government had means of stopping them. Those means still exist. Igon is dead, but the secret police could be revived. It has been a long time since a verbal mask has

been implanted, but that maskart still lies ready to the Green Queen's hand.

"My Lady, you may use what means you will. If you choose to send the Lowers down Stairs again —or re-erect the barrier—who has the right to complain?" Leaf had made a gesture of repugnance; Bonnar hurried on. "You must have time to carry out your plans. In the end, you will free the whole planet and give us all unpolluted food. Until then, it is your right—almost your duty—to rule.

"Forgive me, Lady." He bowed very low. Then he sat down at her feet.

"I am the Queen, yes," Leaf answered. "I will not rule in that way."

She stood up. The pale blue halo about her had grown stronger. "I am grateful to Odic—and Bonnar—for having tried to help me solve my problems," she said. "But they are *my* problems. They will be solved, and solved soon.

"The council meeting is dismissed."

She sat down again. The council members rose and filed past her. Each, as he passed, bowed almost to the floor. If this council meeting had done nothing else, it had rendered more complete her ascendency.

The big room grew empty. Leaf remained sitting, her head resting on her hand. At last Bonnar said, in a soft, flat voice, "My Lady, what will you do now?"

He had spoken so softly that she may have thought his voice a part of her own thoughts. "I will find my consort," she answered. "I am going to my tree."

* * *

The resolve, announced only to Bonnar, had somehow spread through the city. It brought with it an immediate lessening of tension. The complaints, the muttering, ceased. A tender expectation took their place. Strangers spoke to strangers, smiling, and their talk was always of the good days that were coming. And over and over again one heard the words, "The Queen . . . her consort . . . the tree . . . the tree . . . the tree . . .

On the morning of the day after the scene in the council room, Queen Leaf left the city. She had refused all company on her mission except Bonnar's; he was even to pilot the 'copter for her. At first he had been almost tremulous with happiness at her preference for him; then it occured to him that she wanted him with her because he offered her the sort of companionship an unusually intelligent dog would have given her. Later, too, he wondered whether there had not been a sort of prescience in her insistence that no one but he should be present when she met her divine

consort.

How different this was from the other trip he had taken with her outside Shalom! She had been still a woman then, or only a little more than a woman, and she had worn one of the protective suits. (Today she had refused the suit, saying that she didn't need it, and that perhaps soon no one would need it.) Horvenile had been with them then; the cabin of the plane had been crowded and small.

And yet there were similarities, too. Today, as on that day so many months before, he was helping Leaf to hunt something. What, and where it was, then as now only she could tell. "The tree." Yes, but what did that mean? Who, except Leaf could tell what was meant by "The Green Queen's golden tree of Life."

Almost as soon as the 'copter was clear of the city she had him go south. He obeyed quickly, proud of his skill in piloting. They beat a wide path back and forth, due south, for perhaps a hundred miles. Then she had him turn so they were headed west.

The beating back and forth continued. He was not the least tired, not the least worried, but he wondered about the Queen. But her orders were always given in a calm, low voice, and her hands, when he looked at her, were resting quietly in her lap.

Once he sighed. She must have thought him impatient, for she said, as if in explanation, "It isn't easy, Bonnar. It is like trying to locate the source of an echo in a big, empty echo-resounding room. You could stand at a hundred different spots along the smooth walls, and hear the echo loud and clear, but it would be always an echo, not the first voice.

"It is that way with the tree. Again and again I feel the . . .tree strongly, but it is always an echo, never the thing itself. Something in the air of Viridis sends the—tree impulse echoing back."

At noon she had him stop. She sat quietly in the cabin while he stretched his legs in the open, drank nutrisoup, and relieved himself. Then they went on with the search.

They had been going west for a long time when she had him turn south once more. Bonnar, looking at the moving green line on the map that marked their airline distance from Shalom, saw that it was rather more than a thousand miles. They had come much further than that, of course.

Darkness came on, and still they had not found what she was hunting. Something—not quite a fear, perhaps an uncertainty—was beginning to stir in him.

He set the 'copter down in a clearing as she bade him. He

drank nutrisoup for his supper; Queen Leaf ate a little fruit, saying that since she had been Queen, she had not been hungry. "I miss being hungry, sometimes," she said.

The night-glow, as usual, filled the sky. Bonnar said, "Forgive me, Lady. But could we not go on with the search, now that we have eaten? I think there is plenty of light."

Queen Leaf shook her head. "No, it's no use. As soon as the sun sets the air becomes filled with echoes and confusions. I could be two feet from the tree, and not know it at night."

He passed the night on the ground outside the 'copter. He did no worry about Felodons or Crotalidi, since he was with the Queen. Once he heard her cough and stir within the cabin, and wondered sleepily whether she slept.

Next day was bright and pleasant. Leaf had him pilot the 'copter due south again. The pleasant, gentle landscape of Viridis slid by beneath the molded nose of the ship.Low hills, slow, winding rivers, glinting in the sunlight a long volcanic slope crowned with a plume of gray smoke once one of the deadly "hot" radiation area. They had come much further from Shalom today!

Today Leaf seemed restless. She rubbed her hands back and forth over her eyes, moved in her seat, shivered. It was some two hours past noon when she said to Bonnar suddenly, "I do not understand this."

His heart was pounding. He didn't know what he was afraid of. "What, Lady?" he asked unceremoniously.

"That—let the ship hover, Bonnar. Just here. Yes. Set it down."

He obeyed. Leaf opened the left-hand cabin door and stepped out. She seemed to sway a little as the sunlight fell on her. Her face was pale.

"Are you ill, Lady?" he asked breathlessly.

"No, not that. But it is very strange. I don't understand."

"What? What, my Queen?"

"Why, the tree is here. Just here." She made a gesture, and for a moment he could see a tall, shadowy tree reaching up toward heaven, while golden globes shone with a steady, mysterious light among its branches. "And yet there is nothing. There is nothing here at all except grass."

It was true. They stood on a long, sloping plain that might have been the talus of a volcano. The grass blew away from them in long ripples as the wind stirred it. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing like a tree.

Their glances met. Bonnar swallowed. He said, "It has been a long time. Many things could happen to a tree."

"Yes . . .Go back to the ship's cabin, Bonnar. I will sit here and wait."

He did as she told him. She had seated herself in the deep grass. It came up so high around her that only her head and shoulders were visible. The moments passed.

CHAPTER 7

IT was nobody, only the wind, but Leaf had risen to her feet and was looking about her anxiously. After a little while she sat down again. The pale blue nimbus flickered around her with surprising brightness.

How many times had she got to her feet and looked about her while they had been waiting? It had been early afternoon when Bonnar had put the 'copter down on the slope, and now the shadows were beginning to lengthen. Time after time she had started up, hopefully and eagerly, and it had never been anything except the wind.

Bonnar, who was still sitting in the 'copter, gave a long, trembling sigh—a sigh that was partly fatigue, partly nervous tension, and partly slowly-emerging fear. Suppose—it was only a supposition—but suppose that the mask he had created about the Green Queen had been wrong in this one respect: that the Green Queen's consort did not exist. What would happen if Queen Leaf went back to Shalom without the divine spouse she had been supposed to meet?

That she had not been able to find the tree she sought meant nothing, since only Leaf and himself were aware of her failure. But would she be able to solve the problems of her government without at least some semblance of the consort legend assigned to her? She had averted serious domestic difficulties only by setting out to find the tree. And most of the Uppers were still opposed to her; her absence from the city would have given them time to organize against her . . .He must try to think.

Leaf had risen to her feet again, and this time she did not sit down. Her gaze was fixed on a point behind Bonnar, a spot toward which the opaque portion of the 'copter walls prevented him from looking. She was leaning forward a little, very serious and intent. Was it—did she—?

Bonnar jumped from the 'copter and ran toward her. His heart was thudding heavily. When he reached her, he turned and looked where she was looking. A man was coming toward them, around the long, grass-covered slope.

He was still a long way off, but even at that distance Bonnar found him puzzlingly familiar. When he got a little nearer, Bonnar recognized him. It was Horvendile.

The historian was taking long, quick strides through the deep grass. Like Leaf herself, he wore no protective suit. He was carrying something in his right hand that dragged behind him in the grass.

Bonnar stiffened. He glanced at Leaf—Queen Leaf— and saw that though she was watching Horvendile intently, her face was expressionless. He laid hands nervously on his guns.

Horvendile was winded when he got up to them. "Hello, Leaf," he said gaspingly. "I've come—if it isn't down too deep, that is— to help you dig up what you might call your tree." He showed them what he had been carrying in his right hand. It was a spade.

Bonnar stepped forward. "She's the Queen, the Green Queen," he said roughly. "You'll address her respectfully as she deserves."

Horvendile paid little attention. He seemed to be sniffing at the air. "It's about here, I guess," he said. He set the spade in the grass and stepped down on it with the weight of his body. "—As far as Leaf's being the Green Queen goes, she isn't. Not, that is, unless her name is Merakis." He smiled as if he had made a little joke.

Bonnar felt the hot blood burn in his face. He pulled one of his blasters half way from the holster. Leaf made a gesture that seemed to push him into the background. "Be quiet," she ordered.

"Horvendile what did you mean by that?" she asked. "How did you get here? What are you doing there?"

Horvendile was digging steadily, throwing the big, long grassed clods to one side. "Why to answer your questions a little out of order, my dear, I've been waiting for you nearly a week, out of sight on the other side of the talus of the volcano. I knew you'd come here sooner or later, hunting the tree. It's really the original Green Queen's message beacon, you know, and it's what you were hunting the first time you left Shalom, when you saw the space ship after the earthquake had shifted it."

Queen Leaf pushed her long, bright hair back from her face. "Why—what are you doing here?" she asked.

Horvendile's face changed a little. He stopped digging for a moment. "Oh, I wanted to see you again," he said with an airy wave of the hand. "We used to be . . . friends, Leaf."

"Yes."

"That was a long time ago. She is the Green Queen now."

"No, she's not," said Horvendile, going back to his excavation. "The original Green Queen came to Viridis about 22,000,000 years ago —notice the time, Leaf, and bear

in mind that the half-life of neptunium is 20,000,000 years— when the surface of Viridis was, h'um, shimmering with radioactivity. There was even a little plutonium around then. The original Green Queen didn't come here on purpose, though she had a cargo of small, useful life forms in the hold of her ship and intended to colonize a suitable planet; she was shipwrecked. I rather suspect—we'll know better after we dig up the beacon —that the cause of the wreck was a revolt among her servants. She had a great many servants. I also imagine she had four or five consorts at least not just one."

"But—"

"Why couldn't you be she, or a sort of reincarnation of her? Well, in the first place, Queen Merakis not only wasn't divine, she wasn't even particularly good or moral. In the second place, and a more cogent objection, she wasn't a human being at all. She was a sort of winged ant."

Bonnar had listened to Horvendile's discourse with growing apprehension. What he himself thought of its content he scarcely knew; he was wholly concerned with its effect upon Leaf. It would be bad enough for Leaf to return to Shalom without her divine lover. That would be a misfortune that might lead to a catastrophe in the end. But for Horvendile to convince Leaf that she was not the Green Queen would be disaster unqualified.

For a moment he thought of drawing his blaster and shooting Horvendile as he dug. The little historian's back was half turned toward him; he would be dead before he could defend himself. But Leaf might resent it, and she was, after all, the Queen, with the power of instant death in her hands.

"He's lying," he said hoarsely. "Don't believe him, Leaf. He's an agent of the Uppers. They've sent him here to persuade you so they can get back into power again."

Leaf shook her head. The blue radiance shimmered around her wanly. "Be quiet," she told Bonnar once more. Then, to Horvendile. "I don't think that you are lying. And yet I know that I am the Queen. Tell me, Horvendile, why, if you say now that I never was the queen— why did you teach me that I was?"

Horvendile's face twitched. He threw down his spade on the edge of the hole he had been digging. "I wish you hadn't brought that big selfish blockhead with you," he said bitterly. "His damned ears soak up everything.— Why, Leaf, don't you know why I did it? I was—I was crazy about you—*

He swallowed. "I never had a girl like you before," he said difficultly. "Really a woman. Most girls

are a little bit men, I think. I wanted to keep you. I thought you'd like me better—that I'd have more of a hold on you—if I taught you to be the Queen.

"I broke my promises when I did it. Serious promises, too." He made a little twisted smile. "Nothing could have been more serious. But I wanted to keep you. I was in love with you, Leaf."

"Promises?" Queen Leaf questioned.

"Yes." He had picked up the shovel and was going on with his digging. "I was one of the inner circle of the Apple Pickers, the elect. We had dedicated ourselves to finding out the truth about Viridis and setting it free. I was supposed to teach you to play, as a conscious thing, the part of the Queen. We had come to believe that radioactivty was not a serious danger on Viridis. You were to lower the barrier, just as you did, and declare that the surface of the planet was habitable. But I fell in love with you. I wanted you to have real power. And I taught you that you were really the Queen."

"Don't you see why he's saying this?" Bonnar broke in desperately. "He's jealous. He wants you back. He thinks that if he can convince you that you're not really the queen in the legend, he can get you back in bed with him again."

Leaf appeared to pay no heed to the familiarity, but her face lightened. "Yes, that could be," she said thoughtfully. "I can't see very far into his mind—there is too much power in this place—but I know that he is jealous.

"Horvendile, you have said many things—very surprising things—about the first Green Queen and how she came here. Do you have any proof for what you have said?"

"Proof?" answered Horvendile. He had been digging steadily, and by now the hole was about four feet deep and three feet across. It didn't appear that he was expecting to dig up anything very big. He enlarged the sides of the hole with the shovel before he spoke again.

"Well, Leaf, if you think I'm lying, nothing that I say I saw myself could constitute proof. For example, a friend of mine and I dug up the original Green Queen's ship a couple of weeks ago. I could tell you about all the trouble we had getting it up from where it was and how closely it resembled your cryptaesthetic perception of it and about the fossilized ant we found inside it, and so on. But if you think I'm lying you'd think I made it up.

"The same thing is true about the readings of radioactivity my friend and I got out in the field last year with 'uncalibrated' instruments he'd smuggled in from earth. I don't particularly enjoy being

called a liar, anyhow.

"But you want proof. Perhaps the fact that you can't find your tree and that your consort doesn't come isn't really much in the way of evidence. The mask might just be wrong on these two points.

"But be patient a little longer. In the next five minutes or so I'm going to come up with the final evidence, the irrefutable proof."

Neither Leaf nor Bonnar made any answer. The long grass blew in the wind, and the clods Horvendile tossed up over the side of the hole made a settling noise. In a little more than the five minutes the historian had predicted his spade struck with a clang against metal.

Bonnar directed an anxious glance at Leaf, but she was not even looking at what Horvendile was doing. She was half turned away, watching the sky for the divine consort who would come.

CHAPTER 8

QUEEN Merakis' message beacon was a flattish, gold-colored ellipse, about ten inches long on the larger axis, with a thin spire, forked at the tip, rising from a boss at its center. It seemed to be exceedingly heavy for its size; Horvendile was sweating with exertion when he laid it on the edge of the hole he had dug.

"The proof," he said. He clambered up out of the hole and sat down beside the object. "The proof. And incidentally—" his manner grew faintly professorial and didactic—" the source of many peculiarities in Viridian social structure and anomalies in Viridian social life."

"What's that got to do with anything?" demanded Bonnar. The production of the object from the bottom of the hole had not much impressed him; he had known, after all, that there must be something there or horvendile would not have dug; but he was on fire to spike the fellow's guns. "Are you going to sit there and lecture us?"

Queen Leaf had been looking at the message beacon with remote, dispassionate eyes. Now she turned her gaze on Bonnar. The latter, after a moment, bit his lip. To Horvendile she said. "Go on talking until you are done."

Horvendile nodded. "Queen Merakis' beacon is the cause—the 'onlie begetter,' as the old poet would say, of as consistent and stubborn a group neurosis as one would want to encounter. As with a neurosis, everything is interpreted in terms of the original experience. Or you could call it paranoia—it's an internally consistent, organized, dominat system of delusory ideas." He cleared his throat.

"What are the psychological realities that underlie Viridian social life?" he continued. "I think

you'll agree that they are guilt and punishment for the Lowers and anxiety for the Uppers. And for everybody alike there is, constantly fear.

"Evidence which would tend to disprove the necessity for these psychological orientations is disregarded, and everything, even inanimate objects, is forced into the frame. The writhing trees, for example, which are no more sentient than Mimosa pudica on Earth is, have been made the subjects of a, logically, quite ridiculous story about human beings who were transformed into trees as a punishment for some unspecified guilt, and the story is widely believed.

"Again the frame. Guilt. Punishment. Fear."

He paused. "Prove it," Bonnar said truculently. He had decided on the line he would take: that Horvendile, from A to Z, was lying. "How did you know the beacon was there, if you didn't put it there yourself? Prove the things you've said."

Horvendile looked angry, but he only sighed. "Will you say that, because Leaf knew the beacon was here, she buried it?" he asked mildly. "After my friend and I dug up the original Green Queen's ship, I had an inkling of what Leaf had been hunting the first time she left Shalom. I got a fix on the beacon from three different points, and the lines intersected here. I have some ESP myself, you know, though not nearly so much as Leaf has. In this case, it was probably an advantage not to have so much, since I wasn't confused by reverberations from the beacon.

"But Bonnar will say none of this is really proof. Well . . . ."

He studied the beacon closely for a moment or two. Then he turned a tiny lever that, about two inches up, projected from the shaft of the forked spire. He frowned. After an instant he gave the lever two opposite turns.

Bonnar had the impression that the sky had suddenly darkened. He looked up, perplexed. No, it was still light, thought sunset was approaching. But a darkness almost palpable had descended on him. A cloud of horror wrapped his brain.

The ground where he stood was dangerous. That was the first of the realities. It was alive with danger; even in his protective suit he could hope to survive only a few hours. He looked at Leaf and Horvendile, naked against the danger, and was astonished not to find them blackening and writhing from the upward rain.

He knew whose fault the danger was. It was the Lowers who had done it. Instead of feeding him, as their duty was, they had condemned him to this horror, this momentary expectation of flayed and

blasted death.

Why did they hate him so? He had never done anything to them but give them their legitimate uses. But their hate was so great that they didn't care in the least what happened to *them*, so long as he suffered. It was a selfishness he couldn't fathom. He felt like screaming with horror at their hate their stupidity.

They'd be punished when—if, if, if—he was rescued. Nothing could be too bad for them then. But the rescue ship must come soon. The danger was sickening. If the ship didn't come soon, he couldn't live.

He turned his eyes to the sky again, this time looking for rescue. It was empty, there was nothing in the darkening hemisphere that promised hope. He moaned. The ship, the rescue ship—when would it come? Hurry, hurry. Oh, the ship!

Horvendile had bent over the beacon again. Once more he twisted. Bonnar felt the cloud of horror around him lift.

He licked his lips. They were salty. Sweat was running down his face. His whole body, inside his protective suit, was soaked with sweat.

"You see?" said Horvendile. "I stepped up the output of the transmitter a little, that was all. Do you see how that sort of thing, even at a lower power, could have affected Viridian society?

"Once one becomes aware of the constant psychological pressure from the beacon, many peculiar features in that society become explicable." He twinkled. "Its division into three castes, which correspond to the ant people, their personal attendants, and their cattle. The Uppers' unreasoning belief that the Lowers—who ought, by ant standards, to be supplying them with a sweet nourishing secretion—are somehow failing in their duty. The society's toleration of women who live only for childbearing, as a termite queen lives only to lay eggs. The conservatism, even the backwardness of Viridian life. And even the rearing of the KGs in their crystal cells has its parallels with other insect societies, though I don't want to overstress this.

"But the most striking thing, of course, is the fear that everybody on Viridis has of radiation damage. That fear, except for a few areas, is quite unjustified at present. But it was fully justified at the time Merakis lived."

"But—I don't understand." Leaf sounded puzzled. "I could lift the barrier because I was the Queen, and people would not be hurt. But radiation damage is real. Many have died from it."

"They have not," Horvendile contradicted flatly. "Fungus disease has killed a few Lowers. But the

radiation lesions have been psychosomatically produced. People have died of fear.

"I can't believe you," Leaf responded. "Certainly, I felt the emotions of which you spoke when you turned the transmitter up just now. But how does it work?

"And—you say that I am not the Queen. Horvendile, I could kill you as you sit there, just by raising my hand. I don't understand what you have been saying. But I *am* the Queen."

Bonnar, despite his recent experience, felt a tremulous hope. If Leaf continued to assert herself, the situation could yet be saved.

Horvendile laughed. "Of course you could kill me, my dear. I never doubted it. But where does your power come from? From the beacon Queen Merakis had set up.

"What the beacon is, is a sort of mechanical telepath. It works by inducing in the recepient emotions identical to those the sender felt. It is powered, I believe, by uranium salts, which have a long half-life.

"Now, telepathy"— Horvendile rubbed his nose "—telepathy is something we still don't know too much about. I have been told by specialists that, while it isn't a part of the electro-magnetic spectrum of energy, it is capable, under suitable conditions, of being translated into that spectrum and back again.— You must remember, in listening to my explanation, that I am only a historian.

"Queen Merakis' message beacon was set up roughly 22,000,000 years ago. The message was never received, for reasons I'll go into a little later, and the rescue ship never came. Merakis and all those with her—consorts, children, body attendants and, ah, lacteal sources —died from radiation. But the message kept on being given out.

"Why did the ant people make such an improbably durable beacon to transmit a message that would need to be transmitted only a little while? They even equipped it with a flotation device in the bottom to keep it above any possible lava flows. That's why I had to dig down only a few feet to find it, after all those millions of years.

"It's only a guess, of course, but I imagine they were incapable of building anything that *wasn't* improbably durable. Their culture was ages old before they were wrecked on Viridis— an old culture, a highly evolved one, and one that had lasted without change for countless millenia. Naturally, anything they built was durable. But that's by the by.

"As I was saying, the message never got out. It didn't get out because Viridis was surrounded then —and is surrounded now—by a layer of ionized water molecules. It was even thicker in the days of

Merakis. And it acted as an almost perfect insulator against the telepathic—uhm—impulses.

"All clear so far, Leaf, my dear?"

The sun had set; the moon-bright radiance was beginning to kill the sky. Leaf said, "Yes, it is an explanation. But look." She held out her hand, and bluish light dripped from it. "Explain that."

Horvendile nodded, but he seemed a little disturbed. "I hope you don't still think that your consort . . ." he mumbled. "Well!" He cleared his throat.

"Ever since the beacon was set up, impulses from it have been retained within the atmosphere of Viridis, in a sort of greenhouse effect. By now there is an enormous amount of telepathic, uhm, energy available. Don't you remember that I said that energy was translatable into the familiar electromagnetic spectrum? In the first days of our association, Leaf, you unwittingly produced some telekinetic phenomena. It is a subject in which I have long been interested. I saw what was possible. What I did, Leaf, was to teach you how to turn some of the energy from the beacon into electrical and radio impulses. A long-dead researcher, Siegmund Freud, said that the psyche is basically electrical. And your 'miracles,' Leaf, are at bottom electricity."

He halted. "I wish I hadn't done it," he said rather plaintively. "Taught you to be the Queen, I mean. It seemed to be a good idea at the time. But as our special group within the Apple Pickers used to say. 'There's a serpent in every bushel of apples.' —That was an awfully useful slogan for piquing people's curiosity."

The time had come, Bonnar saw, for him to speak. "You're lying," he said lightly but positively. "You put that contraption there yourself, and it's not a beacon it's a supersonic wave generator, or perhaps a projector in maskart."

Horvendile shrugged. He was still sitting on the ground beside the golden ellipse. "Why . should I bother to convince you?" he asked.

"Because," Bonnar retorted, "I have some influence with L—with the Queen.

"If the projector's as important as you say, shut it off. You say it's been going for millions of years, but even so, shutting it off ought to make some difference.

"Shut it off. Then Leaf and I can tell whether or not you're lying. Shut it off."

Horvendile seemed undecided. He put his face down close to the ellipse and studied it. "I don't think they meant it to be shut off easily," he murmured. "They'd be afraid their Lowers . . . ."

He fingered the forked tip of the spire thoughtfully. "I wish we

had a little more light," he said. "but—" His other hand went out.

Just before he twisted the spire on its base Leaf cried out. It was a cry of warning, of insight, of sudden fear. "Horvendile! Don't! They meant it to kill!"

It was already too late. An intolerably bright light shot out from the top of the spire and bathed Horvendile's body.It was so bright his flesh seemed transparent from it. Bonnar raised his arm to shield his eyes from the light.

When he put his arm down again, Horvendile's body was sliding slowly forward into the hole he had taken the beacon from. At last the serpent in the bushel of apples had crawled out.

CHAPTER 9

LEAF turned her head from side to side, looking around her slowly. She seemed to be awakening from a dream. "Horvendile," she said in an uncertain voice. "Oh, Horvendile!"

For a moment she covered her face with her hands. But when she took them down she seemed, as far as Bonnar could judge in the bright moon-glow, composed and dry-eyed.

Bonnar said, "It was a trigger—an arrangement—on the beacon made so that none of the ant people's servants would dare tamper with it. The servants did not want the rescue ship to come, since their punishment then would be worse than dying on Viridis could be."

Threre was a long pause. Then Leaf answered, "Yes."

"I am not the Queen. What I believed was, all of it, nothing. The myth of the Green Queen was a mask you made up— I am not *any* queen."

In a welter of impulses, slowly clarifying now that the projector was off, Bonnar started toward her and tried to put his arm around her. She pushed him away.

"Don't," she said. "You don't want me any more, now that you know I'm not the Queen or anyone important. Go on back to Shalom, Bonnar. Take care of your own interests. That's what you want to do."

In the glow from the sky Bonnar tried to study the expression of her face. It was difficult; she had sunk down in the grass as if she were exhausted, and her head was bent. The halo of light around her had almost completely died away.

Bonnar swallowed. "But Leaf," he said, "have you considered—I mean, it isn't really hopeless. You may not be the Queen, but you can still do the things you used to do. There's still plenty of power for the the—miracles. If we go back to Shalom soon . . . . ."

"I can't," she said without look-

ing at him. "I thought I could. But I haven't anything left.

"I'm sorry, Bonnar. I would if I could. I don't want anybody to suffer. Can you understand? I haven't anything left.

"Go back to Shalom yourself. That's what you want to do."

"Do you want me to go?" he demanded.

She did not answer. The halo around her had died away completely. He could not see her face. But he had the impression that she was as pale as death.

"You've been more susceptible to the projector. That's why you are having difficulty in realizing my actions have been the logical ones in the face of events. My fears, hates, ambitious, have not been my own."

"You don't really love me," she said flatly "I *know*."

"You're still talking like the Queen!" he retorted. "And you aren't one."

Her head lifted at last. "I know when I'm loved!" she said.

For a long moment he looked at her, then slowly turned and walked to the copter. There was deathly silence behind him. He got in, started the motor. Then, as the copter lifted slowly, he dropped back the few feet to earth and watched it go up and away.

"Now I've got to stay," he said. "And it should be obvious I'm not staying because you are mistress of Viridis. Out here you are mistress of nothing but wasteland."

She looked up at him, a strange, wildly hopeful, yet frightened look in her eyes. "Then why are you staying?" she whispered.

He sat down beside her.

"Because you're Leaf—my Leaf; the Green life of the world. And still Queen. Queen Leaf."

Her voice in answer sounded wild. "But you've sent the copter away! We can't get back now . . ."

"Why should we? With the projector gone, and the ant psychoses gone, people will live like people, not insects."

"But what will we do?" she asked, almost tearfully.

He leaned over and kissed her long and tenderly, "Didn't I say you were still Queen?" he asked. "Whatever the power in the air that caused your "miracles", it's still there and with your ESP, you can manage a few more of them."

She looked at him quietly. "No," she said. "I can't."

"Not even to helping your mate to carve out a new home in this wilderness?" he asked, smiling.

Her eyes were misty as she squirmed back into his embrace and lifted her face to be kissed. A long blue spark flashed to his lips, startling them both.

"You see!" he said. "Miracles!"

THE END

. . . MOONSHINE . . .

By

T. P. Caravan

It is a beautiful day, deep in the Ozark Mountains. The sun hangs motionless in the blue sky, glittering brightly on the shiny copper kettle of a still which nestles in the bushes beside a clearing. Collard greens and black-eyes peas, corn pone and shortening bread, fried chicken and hushpuppies grow wild all through the woods and the clearing. Two gentlemen dressed in overalls, wool hats, and shotguns hover near the still. One of them speaks:

Han' me thet jug a minute, Cousin Zeke, Ahhhh. Mighty fine corn. Don't think we ever run off a better batch. Maybe jest a tetch more turpentine in the mash. Give her more kick."

"Now, don't o messin' with the ingredients, Cousin Clem. Last time you did that the pore ole still turned out champagne for three days. Come near to makin' us lose our reputation. And you better step out of the clearin': government man might spot you.

"Shucks, Zeke. No revnoover dast to show his face back in these mountings."

"Don't never trust no revnoover, Cousin Clem. Hear tell now they're using helicopters to come up looking for stills."

"Thet's just plum awful of them to do a thing like thet. What's a helicopter?"

"You're purty ignorant, ain't you, Clem?"

"Shore. What else is there to be? What's a helicopter?"

"Sort of a twirly thing thet flies. Ole revnoo agent, he jest sets up there in his helicopter and he points it this way and he points it

thet way and pretty soon he smells the mash. Then all he got to do is follow his nose."

"Golly, Zeke. Shucks. Come near to make me cry, tellin' me a tale like thet. Han' me the jug a minute."

"You just done put it down on thet stump n the learin.

"So I did. I'll go get it. Zeke! Looky yander! Is thet one of them there twirlycopters? Up in the sky there? Looky, Cousin Zeke, it's ashootin' out fire. It's acomin' down in the clearin'. Han' me my shotgun, Zeke: here comes the government."

"Wait a minute, Clem. Let the revnoover get out. Don't shoot yet."

"Here he comes, Zeke, here he comes down. Never thought a twirlycopter would look like thet there. He's openin' a door, Zeke, he's a gittin' out. Kin I shoot him now?"

"Where's your manners, Clem? The code of the hills says you don't shoot a man until you kin see the whites of his eyes."

"But lookie, Zeke. He ain't got no whites to his eyes. He's all over green."

'By heck, so he is. I don't know what the code of the hills says to do now. Little feller, ain't he? I never did see a revnoover under four foot tall before, specially not a green one."

"Hear tell there's a new administration up Washington way, Zeke. Maybe they all look like thet. Kin I shoot now?"

"Wait a minute, Clem. If there's a new bunch in and they all look like thet . . .Han' me the jug."

"He sees us, Zeke. He's a comin' this way."

"Iggle iggle iggle."

"What's he sayin', Zeke?"

"Durned if I know, Clem. Yankee-talk."

"Iggle iggle iggle."

"He's abowin' to us, Clem."

"New administration shore is polite."

"He's apointin' to the still. Kin I shoot him now?"

"Iggle iggle iggle."

"Code of the hills says no. Let's dump him in the kettle instead."

"Ruin a lot of good moonshine, Zeke. Remember the time thet ole mounting lion fell into the mash?" "Added flavor, Cousin Clem. Makes it full-bodied and mellow."

"Iggle iggle iggle."

"He's apointin' into the sky, Zeke. He's awavin his arms. He's amakin' a speech. He's a government man, all right. Looky, Zeke. Thet's four arms he's awavin."

"Yankees don't care how silly they look, Clem. Grab him when I count up to three. One . . . one one . . ."

""What's the matter, Zeke?"

"Shucks, Clem. Forgot what comes next. Grab him anyway. Now! Dump him in! Quick!"

"Iggle iggle iggle."

Splash!

"Didn't weigh much, did he?"

"Put the cover on, Cousin Clem. Start the fire agoin!. Hear tell there's a big square dance down at Widder Hatfield's. Lets put on our clean overhalls and go on over."

They leave, sliding down the mountainside amid a small avalanche of limestone and jugs. Night falls. The distant sound of merry-making—fiddles, whoops, and gunshots—fills the soft night air. The moon rises. Gently the still begins to operate: the best corn liquor is made by moonlight. "Iggle iggle iggle," says the still. Silence falls. Daylight comes. So do Zeke and Clem.

"Open her up, Cousin Zeke. Let's take a look and see if she's done. She's been acookin' and astewin' all night. Hey! What's thet thing out in the clearin'?"

"Thet's thet Yankee's flyin' machine, Clem."

"Shucks. I done forgot all about him."

"Me, too. We got to remmember to take his bones out before we set it up in jugs. Customers might complain."

"Reckon we could throw in a mite more battery acid and dissolve his bones, Zeke. Open her up."

"Iggle iggle iggle."

"Hey!"

"Hey!"

"Iggle iggle iggle."

"Look, Zeke, looky. He's drunk up two hundred gallons of mash. He's arubbin' his stomach. He's agrinnin' at us."

"Yankees sure are different from what they used to be, Cousin Clem. Never knew one before what could polish off two hundred gallons of mash while it was aboilin.' Not in one night. Must be the drinkin' champion of all Yankeeland. Reach me thet there hatchet, Clem, and I'll bust open his skull for him."

"I can't move, Cousin Zeke."

"Neither can I, Cousin Clem."

"He's ahaulin' us off to his flyin' machine."

"He's afixin' to carry us off to Washington D. C."

"Goin' to bury us in a deep cell in the old federal jailhouse."

"He's abringin' the still along."

"Evidence. He's agoin' to put us on the rockpile."

"Goin' to fix us up with hard labor for life. Never no corn again. Never no moonshine."

"Sentence us to hard labor. Work: I'll jes' die daid."

"He's ashovin' us inside. He's afiddlin' with the controls. He's atakin' us to Washington D. C. Never no moonshine again till we jest keel over and die amongst them hard-hearted Yankees.

It is a beautiful day, deep in the Unpronounceable Mountains. The sun hangs motionless in the purple sky, glittering brightly on the shiny copper kettle of a still which nestles in the red bushes beside a clearing. Worshippers come by, dropping gifts at the feet of the two gods who operate the still, the two gods who create nectar and ambrosia for their adoring people. One of the gods speaks.

"Yankees sure like this moonshine, Cousin Clem. Never knew Yankees were such nice folks. Take yourself a sup out of this here jug. I think this is the best batch we ever run off."

"It's the moon, Cousin Zeke. Corn distills best in the moonlight, and this Washington D. C. is the onliest place I ever seen where they got two moons in the sky at one time."

THE END

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The Bug

by

Edmond Ritter

Illustration by Alex Engel

Papa took Junior shopping said to get him a new ted what he really wanted, and That's when Papa's life b which he couldn't escape.

THE clerk beamed. "We have something very nice in a bug," he said. "This is Bosco Bumpsy, the Beagle Bug, the latest '64 model. I'm sure you and the boy would find it just a barrel of fun."

"It's not exactly what we had in mind." Don said, with a dubious glance down at Buster, who was smearing chewing gum against the glass front of the toy counter. "Was it, Buster?"

Buster's eyes were starry with childish gall, venom, rancor, and malevolence.

"I wanna bug!" he said.

"Mama said to buy you a teddy bear. Wouldn't you like a nice cuddly teddy bear?"

"This shipment is selling like hot-cakes," the clerk said. "As a matter of fact, this one here is the last we have in stock. And the price is really absurd. Only $39.95. Marked down from $69.95, and absolutely guaranteed."

"That's quite a bargain." Don agreed. "Do you have anything nice in a teddy bear?" He was going to say, "nice and inexpensive," and then decided not to.

"Certainly, sir," the clerk said. "If you'll just step down to this end of the counter, please."

Don nudged Buster with his knee, and they followed the clerk. The bug went along. It raced across the top of the counter, got to the teddy bears before them, and sat hunched up on its eight legs, waiting.

Buster screamed with delight. "I wanna bug." he howled two or three times. His voice rose to a rough whine, then sank to a low hoarse, piteous wheedle.

The clerk chuckled. "I'm sure you do, sonny," he said. He turn-

for a new toy. Mama had
dy bear, but Junior knew
came home with The Bug.
ecame a nighmare from
The bug, bug, bug, bug . . .

ed to Don. "It's really quite an educational toy, just the thing for a bright young chap like your son here."

Don recoiled in horror. "Him?"

"Oh, I say, sorry if I said anything wrong. I supposed he was yours. Looks a bit like you."

"He's mine," Don said.

"Well, let's be honest about it then. So much more reason for an educational toy."

"You have a point there," Don said.

"Yes, that's true." the clerk said, as though this were a sudden revelation to him also. "Well, as I was saying. Now, if you'll stand back from the counter to give him a little room. I'll have him perform for you."

The clerk snapped his fiingers. The bug scampered up and down the counter, stopped abruptly to inspect a speck of dust on the glass case, jumped up, ran into the teddy bears, and neatly tumbled two of them off the counter to the floor. Then it stopped and hunched up again. The clerk smiled pleasantly, picking up the teddy bears. "Isn't that utterly amazing?" he asked.

"Well—" Don said.

"Now as for the educational part of it, sir, if you'll permit me.

"Now then. In the first place, this is strictly a speculatrix type, based on the early work of Walter and his associates. I presume you're acquainted with that."

"Oh, yes," Don said.

"However, this bug incorporates outstanding improvements over those primitive models. As you know, they were based on only two functional elements, with positive sense organs, one for light, one for touch. Whereas this improved

model contains four, actuated by light, touch, sound and even smell. Each receptor may be switched to either positive or negative, as you wish. For example, Bosco will follow the beam of a flash light, or search for the dark, come or retreat at your spoken command, depending entirely on how you set his controls—"

"I wanna bug," Buster pleaded.

"Quiet!" the clerk said. "Now if I may, I should like to point out the one truly outstanding advance in this model, that makes it far superior to anything else ever offered—"

"Go ahead," Don said.

The clerk pointed a skinny finger first at Bosco, then at Don's nose. "This model works on static electricity!"

"Static electrictiy?" Don asked.

"Yes," said the clerk eloquently. "All previous models ran on batteries. But Bumpsy here runs on static electricity, picks it right out of the air—free!"

The Beagle Bug sat up on its four hind legs, looked quizzically at Don, and said "hello!"

"Wrap him up," Don said. "I'll take him."

"I'm sure you'll never regret it, sir," the clerk said. He picked up the bug and with something between a screech and a wheeze instantly dropped it.

"Oops," he said. "Just static electricity. I forgot to ground it!"

Don carried the bundle under his arm, dragging Buster along behind him. As he turned from the corridor, he glanced back over his shoulder and saw that the clerk was still watching him. For a fraction of a second he thought he detected on the man's face an expression of intense relief. The clerk waved at him, Don gestured back, and then he and Buster and the bug got on the elevator.

Myrna was not overly impressed. "That's quite a bit to pay for a toy," she said, "thirty-nine ninety-five. That would almost make a payment on the car."

"It isn't really a toy," Don said. "It's a robot really, almost alive. It has four sensory elements that cause it to search for the dark, or the light, and it has memory, too. It's really sort of a coded calculating machine on wheels, excepting that it doesn't have wheels."

"For thirty-nine ninety-five it should have wheels," Myrna said. "If you don't mind, I'll go do the dishes."

Don stood in the center of the small living room, holding the box.

"I want my bug," Buster said.

"Yes, but I'll show you how to play with it," Don said. He reached his hand into the box, gave a yowl, and dropped it.

"Ouch," he said.

The box lay on the floor, the flap open. There was a faint crackling sound, something like that of a baby chick breaking its way out of the shell, and Bosco walked out of the box, onto the carpet, its sensory element alternately held high and then lowered as it sniffed its way about the room. Suddenly then it started to gyrate in ever increasing circles away from the light of the floor lamp, in the course of which it carefully avoided running into both the piano stool and the piano, until it had worked its way to the edge of the carpet, which it then followed all the way around the room.

"Look," Don said. "It's inspecting its new home. Watch now, how it's going into the kitchen."

From the kitchen came a scream, punctuated with the crash of dropping dishes.

Alert to the situation, Don dashed into the kitchen snapped on the lights, ran back into the living room and turned off the floor lamp. The bug, seeking darkness, obligingly turned around and started back into the living room.

"Boy, that's great," Don said, beginning to like the little creature. "Maybe we can teach it to do tricks. I'll go get my flash light from the garage."

When he came back, Buster was sitting on the floor, and Bosco was playfully doing circles around him.

"Now we'll teach him to do a trick," Don said. "Turn on the light, Buster."

Immediately the bug slithered across the carpet, into the dining room, around the corner of the kitchen, and down the basement steps, with Don in hot pursuit.

Don poked around the basement looking for it. He could hear the faint hum of the static motor, but couldn't place the direction.

Upstairs Buster was crying..

Myrna came to the door of the basement. "Why don't you give the baby his toy?" she said.

' Would if I could," Don said, "but I can't find it."

"How do you expect to find anything in the dark?"

"You wouldn't understand," Don said.

He continuel to hunt for it, poking about the coal bin and the fruit cellar. Once he located a round humming object and grabbed it, but it turned out to be the wait meter. In disgust he gave up the search for the time being and went back upstairs.

"I want my bug, you took my bug," Buster sobbed.

"No more bug tonight, young man," Don said. "You go right up to bed."

Myrna took Buster's dinner up

to him, and returned, looking sad and hurt. She didn't say anything about the bug, or the thirty-nine ninety-five.

After dinner they sat together in the living-room, Don in his easy chair, Myrna somehow remote and far away on the sofa. He idly turned the pages of a book. She knitted.

"Turn on the colorvision, dear," she said at last.

For a few minutes they watched her favorite program.

Right in the middle of it, just when the announcer was giving the details of the $100,000.00 first prize contest for telling "Why I like CUD, the Chewing Gum With the Flavor that Lasts All Day," the colorvision gave out with a raucous snarl and the picture became a hideous glare of many colored lines, like a kaleidoscope gone crazy.

Myrna jumped to her feet. "What in heaven's name is the matter?"

Don dashed over and spun the dials and knobs on the colorvision set. All twenty-eight channels were the same. A whir and a buzz, and a blur of colors. He turned it off. "I guess it doesn't work," he said lamely.

Myrna arched her eyes, darkly. "You know it sounded something like that toy you brought home."

"Impossible," he said. "I'll have the colorvision man come in tomorrow and fix it."

"I bet it's that fool bug," she said.

She resumed her position on the sofa, Don picked up his book. Once he thought he heard Bosco coming up the cellar steps, into the kitchen. He ran to the kitchen door and snapped on the light, but there was nothing there.

Myrna gave him an odd look when he came back.

"Guess I'm a little jumpy," he said.

Maybe we better go to bed," she said.

"Maybe we better," he agreed.

DON woke up in the middle of the night, sensing Something in the room. He lay a long time, listening. Must be my imagination, he thought. Slowly he drifted back to sleep.

As he dozed quietly, a sudden jolt of electricity hit his big toe. He flew straight up in the air, hovered for a second, and then collapsed back on the bed covers.

Myrna snapped on the bed lamp.

"Guess I had a nightmare," he said weakly, apologetically. "Turn out the light, and we'll go back to sleep. I'm sorry."

But he couldn't sleep, and lay awake the rest of the night.

When he was out of earshot

next morning Don phoned Grimble's Department Store. A husky feminine voice answered. "Can I help you please?" it asked

Yes, I'd like to return a toy."

"I'll give you the toy department."

Don recognized the wheezy voice.

"I'd like to get my money back on a toy I bought yesterday. It was guaranteed to be satisfactory, and I'm not satisfied with it."

"What was the toy?" the clerk asked.

"Bosco Bumpsey, the Beagle Bug," Don said, "it cost 39.95."

Why, certainly" the clerk said, you just bring it in, and we'll refund the purchase price."

"That's just the trouble, I can't bring it in. That's why it's not satisfactory, I can't catch it!"

The clerk laughed.

"It's not funny,"

"I'm very sorry, sir." the clerk said. "I thought you were jesting."

"I've never been more serious,"

"Well," the clerk said, "you just bring it in and we'll be glad to give you the refund."

" * ! — * "

"I'm sorry, sir," the clerk said," it's a store rule."

"Give me the manager!"

The manager said it was a store rule. They'd like to, but no exceptions. If the merchandise was returned in good condition, they'd be glad to refund the purchase price. Any other course was naturally unthinkable.

When Don got home that night, Buster met him at the door.

"Where is my bug." he said, "I want my bug. What did you do with my bug? I want my bug, bug, bug, bug.

Don crawled stealthily around the furnace, following the pitched whine, the occasional snap of static electricity. Sometimes the sound was nearer, then farther away, but always it seemed to come from just a little ways ahead of him around on the other side of the furnace.

Two can play this game, he thought. His knees ached where they carried his weight against the rough cement floor. He stopped for a moment's rest, reached his hand behind him to rub his back. Suddenly into his hand bit eight searing needles of flame. For a moment Don glowed like a neon bulb. Then a spark shot from the end of his nose and smacked and splattered against the hot water heater.

Don didn't say anything. He looked behind him. Bosco was gone.

"This is war," he said, loud enough for the bug to hear.

"THE colorvision man was here.

He said he never saw a CV set that acted like ours."

"Did he fix it?" Don asked.

"Fix it? No, he said he couldn't fix it. He said there was nothing wrong with it, it just won't work."

"That's strange," Don said.

THE beagle Bug showed itself around the house occasionally, and for brief intervals, but since it preferred the dark, it was most often in the basement. Listening at the door, Don could hear it. He had it all planned. After Myrna went to bed, he got the big metal box out of the car, and took it into the basement. It was a two foot cube, constructed from sheet steel. Inside it was padded to deaden sound and painted black to absorb light. On the front at floor level was a small trap door. This was the idea. The bug, feeling its way around the dark basement would, because of the setting of its sound and light receptors, seek the quietest, darkest spot, which would be the inside of the box. It would enter, the trap door would snap into place, Don could extract the little monster, take it back to the wheezy-voiced clerk at Grimbles, and get his money back.

Don placed the contrivance on the floor, back of the furnace, and connected a wire cable from it to the cold water pipe. This time Bosco would be grounded for sure.

He set the trap door, tiptoed upstairs, snapped off the basement light, sat back in his big easy chair, lit his pipe, and waited expectantly. A few minutes later it happened. He heard the trap door slam shut. He took a few peaceful drags on the pipe, and nonchalantly descended to the basement. He turned on the light, although by now he could see almost as well in the dark as he could in broad daylight. The trap door was shut, and from inside the box, despite the padding, came the sound of a thousand banshees and the repeated impact of body against box. After a while the sounds became less frequent, and finally stopped entirely. Don opened the trap door and stuck his hand inside. Something clawed, bit and scratched his hand. He jerked it out. For a moment, stunned, he didn't know what had happened. Blood oozed from the multiple cuts, running in little rivlets down his fingers. A rat poked its head out through the hole in the box; its beady eyes adjusted to the light, then it flashed out of the box, along the side of the wall, up to the window ledge and was gone.

"YOUR hand is all bandaged," said his boss, have an accident?"

"Bread knife slipped." Don said.

"My, my," the boss said, "that's

too bad. Those things will happen."

"I want my bug," Buster screamed, "My bug, bug, bug, bug, bug."

"Can't you find the baby's toy for him?" Myrna asked.

"It's hiding because it's shy." Don said. "As soon as it gets used to us, it will come out all by itself."

"Hmppf," Myrna said. "Thirty-nine dollars and ninety-five cents, plus tax!"

"I want my bug," Buster screamed, "bug, bug, bug, bug, bug."

ON Saturday morning Myrna took Buster to the doctor for his semi-annual check-up.

Don had the house to himself. He was sure the little visitor was in the basement, because the night before he had turned the lights on all over the house and after waiting a suitable length of time he had locked the kitchen door.

He went up to the attic and found his old minnow seine. It was a little dusty, but strong and still in good condition.

He went back down and let himself into the basement, entering quietly by the outside door. He connected the garden hose, and washed down the cellar floor.

Bosco failed to make an appearance and Don had another idea. He stuffed rags into the cellar drain.

Then he walked up the steps, opened the door to the kitchen, seated himself comfortably on the landing, and flooded the basement. There was only one way out, past him, and into the kitchen. On his lap he held the minnow seine in readiness. The water got an inch deep. Don yawned. It rose to two, then three inches, almost up to the door sill. Don yawned again, and leaned back against the steps.

Bosco sat next to him, watching the water gushing from the hose, watching Don's every movement, its little light receptors flickering with interest. Don looked around at Bosco. He's a cute little creature he thought, so intelligent.

"Hello!" Bosco said.

"Hi," Don said, and turning back to the basement, swished the stream of water back and forth, playing it against the walls.

"Yoop!" he said, jumping up. The bug was gone, or at least going. Frightened by the commotion, it had started to amble slowly up the steps, then quickening its pace it was in the kitchen and under the table.

Don made a dive for it, throwing the minnow seine ahead of him. Somehow he missed the bug entirely and got tangled up in the netting and the legs of the table, rol-

led over to get up and bumped his head. He stretched out on the floor and sighed.

Myrna came in the back way, leading Buster by the arm.

"Hello," she said. "You certainly look silly, lying under the table, wrapped up in that net. If you're tired, why don't you go to bed?"

ON Sunday, the final battle plan was put into action. Buster was playing with a hammer, banging it against the side of the piano. It came to Don in a flash. He picked up a large wrench and handed it to Buster. "How would you like to take this down in the basement and play for a while?" he asked.

Five minutes later Buster came back up the steps. He was dragging by one leg the battered, limp, broken form of Bosco. Tears ran pathetically down Buster's little face. He handed the crushed toy to Don.

"Fix my bug," he begged," it's bwoke."

THE END

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RAY PALMER, editor, publisher, business manager.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 7th day of October, 1954.
CHESTER V. LEPAK
(My commission expires January 20, 1957)

THEY ALWAYS HAVE BROWN EYES

By

Bart McCaleb

The title of this story of somewhat deceptive, for we're not really concerned with brown eyes, or blue or hazel or grey eyes, but with a heart and, naturally, a soul.

REX looked down at the sleeping child; then at the girl who stood watching her with incredulity. His hands were moist, his voice muffled. "About how old is she, Naida? I don't know much about little girls."

"Ten, I'd say. A beautiful child! She'll talk, and everything, when she wakes? I can't believe it."

"Yes, everything. I hardly believe it myself, even yet" He looked into Naida's eyes, then glanced quickly away.

Turning abruptly, he walked to the window and stared down at the commonplace street scene. Pint-sized helicopters, some with gay zigzag painting, darted up and down past the window like June-bugs; two nearly collided, in spite of the aircop's frantic signals. "Crazy kids!" Rex muttered, but grinned. Their kind of craziness was somehow refreshingly sane. The stratoliner from Moscow drifted lazily to its appointed spot on a roof a block away; ten minutes late, as usual. Far below the rocket cars shuttled along the elevated. Upstairs air traffic was in its customary four o'clock snarl.

Naida appeared suddenly at his elbow. "When will she wake?"

"Not for hours yet. Doctor Franl said you wanted to see his labora-

tory. Shall we look it over now?"

"Yes, let's."

Rex threw open the door to the huge laboratory. As Naida frowned at the giant gadgets, he tried to explain their functions. He had to confess that the full explanation was yet beyond his own grasp. He knew only that somewhere, in the realm of the subatomic where energy and matter become one, Doctor Franl had discovered the key to the twin mysteries of life and human personality. "Of course the little golden-haired girl in there, and all the others, are only experiments. I wonder if she might have blue eyes? Doctor Franl keeps hoping . . . I sometimes think Doctor Franl is frightened by what he has done, Naida."

"Doctor Franl frightened? Oh Rex, that's absurd! The man's inhuman."

"But he isn't, Naida! Believe me—I know him better than you do; better than anyone in the world, probably. Haven't I worked with him ever since—well, for the last ten years?"

"You're so loyal to anyone you love, Rex." Naida's voice was soft, unconvinced.

Rex recalled his flash of anger that morning, when Doctor Franl gave him the hated assignment he must now carry out. "Why don't *you* tell Naida, Doctor?" Rex had demanded. "Good Lord, how do you think *I* can do it? She knows all about me. Yes, everything. Including how much I detest that Caddon chap she's engaged to. She'll think I'm jealous—lying. She'll think worse things than that."

Doctor Franl got up from behind his desk and came to stand beside Rex, his hand on the young man's shoulder. "You must tell her, Rex. Believe me, you are the one. It will be much better. You'll see! Tell her today, while I'm away. Surely she has begun to wonder about herself. After all, that amnesia story is pretty thin, and she's no fool. And she must not marry Caddon, Rex. She *must* not."

"You mean—what do you mean? You told me there is no possibility of—reversion."

"I told you that and I believe it. You must make her believe it too. It isn't that. But some of these journalists have stumbled onto something. It's publicity I'm afraid of, for her and all the others. Suppose the truth gets out? It will be pretty ghastly. My people must stick together, Rex. If she wants to get married, why doesn't she marry you?"

"You, asking that?" Rex had smiled, bitterly.

So, this was it. No use putting it off. But how to begin? Well, she knew about him. He could start

with that.

"Naida" — abruptly — "you mustn't feel sorry for the little girl. She'll be happy, much of the time, even when she's grown and *knows*. Do most people have more than that? I'm happy, most of the time. You must believe me! And there's more than that; more than happiness. It's to know —Naida, I'm not doing this very well, it's damned hard to make it clear; but if you knew how I feel sometimes, Naida—like on a clear night, looking up at the stars, and knowing something about them. I'm grateful to my very bones—proud—to be a man, Naida; a human being . . . to have a mind that can think and understand and reach back into history and forward to the future. You know, Doctor Franl sent me to the University of Vienna. I had that."

He stopped. It seemed to him he had failed utterly to make his point. But Naida was looking at him, strangely. "You're so sweet, Rex," she said unexpectedly. "Do you mind if I ask you something?"

"Of course not." But his heart tightened.

"Do you ever remember anything . . . before . . .?"

Rex relaxed, smiled. "Not much. But what I remember is all pleasant—a country road, and the smell of the dust in the hot sun—a sort of dim, delirious joy. Yes, I do remember, in an odd sort of way. We call that our preconscious period. Some of us remember quite clearly. Only it's hard to put into words. We didn't have words then, of course. But you won't think me sweet, after what I have to tell you. Doctor Franl says you mustn't marry Jim Caddon. He says you *mustn't*, Naida."

He saw the hot blood rush into Naida's face. Muffed it! He had known he would. "I don't know what business it is of Doctor Franl's! Just because he's a friend of my father's, and fixed me up that time. I'll marry whom I please!"

She paused, trembling. "I'm sorry, Rex. I know you mean all right, but I hate being treated as if I were a child and had no mind of my own. Just because I lost my memory, Doctor Franl needn't think. . ."

"Doctor Franl knows you're no child, Naida! After all, he's the 'Doctor Einstein' of the fortieth century—give him credit for having a few brains!"

"Brains, yes; everybody knows that. But there's still common decency." Naida's heels made a quick tap-tap as she walked away down one of the broad aisles, between two shining tantalum generators. Rex followed. From a small metal table near one of the machines Naida picked up some silken

fluff with glittering filaments, which she dropped with a little cry. "Her hair's still the same color!"

"Well, keep that for a souvenir," Rex suggested, drily. Her glance seared him. "I'm sorry, Naida," he said miserably. "I'm not quite myself, for some reason." They continued walking.

"Rex." She turned to face him, "There was something else, wasn't there, you wanted to say?" Rex looked at her. His throat was drier than dust and no sound would come from it. Naida caught her breath sharply; then turned and ran back the way they had come banging the door behind her. Rex started to follow, changed his mind, wandered a few minutes among the marvelously intricate machines, hating them fiercely. Then he walked to the door and emerged into Doctor Franl's office. To his amazement, Naida was sitting in the scientist's chair, pale but calm.

"Made a little fool of myself, didn't I?" She managed a smile. "Rex, I should have known. I think I did know all the time, subconsciously. That story of the car accident when I supposedly lost my memory and Dad brought me in here—in *here*. No, people aren't carried in here, not people! Oh, Rex!"

"But people walk out of here. You hear—people! Fine people! Why, one of us pilots a London stratoliner; and there's a college professor, and an artist, as well as decent, ordinary folks like the Scotts. I'll take you to see them and their children."

"Children, Rex? Can *we* have children? I mean . . . "

"Wait until you see the Scott youngsters! They're tops. Of course we can have children." He reddened. Naida made a little sound that was almost a chuckle. Then she sobered.

"I asked Doctor Franl once if we had souls," Rex ventured.

"What did he say?"

"He said he is betting *his* that we do."

"It's been a shock." Oh, Rex, can't other people—tell?"

"No, never! There's no difference. Quit thinking about it. There's nothing to be afraid of. Let's not talk about it any more. Let's do something very ordinary but fun, like dashing over to Paris for supper—what say?"

"Yes, let's. Just one more thing. I won't marry Jim, not now. I won't marry anyone for a long time. When I do, it will be one of *us*."

"That's wisest, Doctor Franl says. He says after all, he can't be absolutely sure—we might do something atavistic, like barking in our sleep!"

THE END

DEATH SENTENCE

They were gathered in secret to determine the fate of a world; for their decision would mean life or death to an alien people.

William C. Hoch

A tremor passed through the scientists solemnly gathered in Dr. Romlich's study. Dr. Bellsner, the top atomic brain in the nation, clenched the velvet drapes over the lone window behind him, apprehensive lest anyone see in. Hugo Alter rocked back and forth on the edge of the leather Morris chair, a ludicrous charade of a bereft mother seen in a newreel. Doctors Faulconer, Witman, and Loes sat stiffly on the library bench, ranged like the three wise monkeys shielding their senses against the evil before them. Eva Loes clapped her quivering hands over her ears though the chamber was silent as the depths of the sea.

Dr. Romlich stood mesmerized until Alter scuffed his chair back over the carpet, embarrassed by its sound in the still room. Hugo Alter stepped up beside the senior scientist and peered at the smooth, round disc with a schoolboy's fascination. It was nothing but a flat wafer of gold about the size and shape of a railroad watch case. It was perfectly polished and plain except for two pinholes diametrically opposite. Hugo Alter reached out and passed his hand to and fro under the disc like a magic-show skeptic. The disc hung motionless in the air.

"Please, Hugo," said Dr. Romlich. "Let's not react like high school children. The disc simply hovers in the air. No tricks. In fact, it doesn't really matter how it's done, now." His shoulders sagged.

Bellsner twisted the drapes and continued to stare at the disc which rested in the air twelve inches above the desk-top. "Are you sure there are no people in it now?" he

asked numbly.

"Quite!" muttered Dr. Romlich. "After our Geigers led us to the swamp where we found these discs, both floating in space, we opened one up. I'm sure they're empty now, but here's what we found inside." He held up a circular view of the interior of the disc, magnified twenty diameters. The group was attentively silent. "Here is the brain of the ship, this control room. These cubicles appear to be crew's quarters. Studying this machine and its furnishings we deduced it contained fifteen occupants no more than three-eighths of an inch high. They were two legged, quite possibly resembling earth humans. The ship appears to be unarmed; apparently it was just on a scouting mission."

"So this is what is causing the radar blips and saucer stories!"

"Don't be naive, my dear Hugo. We performed that distraction for the public. The variety of shapes, sizes, and forms we shot across the heavens couldn't be added up to anything, and it kept the newspaper people hopping around and away from the truth. Don't tell me *you* couldn't analyze our sky-technics?" His eyebrows crawled up in mock surprise.

Hugo blushed. "I thought I had them all figured out, those lights and atmospheric tricks and all but now this comes along, and . . . I don't know what to think! Say, this isn't another of your tricks, is it?"

Eva Loes relaxed slightly on the hope it would be.

"No, and I'm sorry it isn't," said Dr. Romlich. "This is a visitor from space. There are the spectrographic plates we made from it and the metallurgical section's analysis."

Bellsner came forward from the window and studied the papers curiously. "This came from Venus," he said simply.

Dr. Romlich nodded. "Very good. The density of the metal told you that, eh, my friend?"

Does the president know? How about the U. N.? Shouldn't they be notified?"

"My dear Eva, what could they do? Only make an interplanetary mess of this thing! No. But I have a concrete suggestion to make tonight that I feel you people are best qualified to pass on. I want your opinions of its merit. *I* can stop those things before they invade us, if that be their plan. We have no indication that it is."

"How?" demanded Faulconer breathlessly.

"I shall send a counter expedition to Venus."

Bellsner snorted. They all knew Dr. Romlich had been nearer the

answer to a spaceship than any other man in the world, but his last experimental rocket had only gone three-hundred miles into the air over New Mexico. That was certain, although still not divulged to the proletariate. "Don't tell me you're going to lead this expedition, Doctor?" Bellsner sneered.

Romlich remained unruffled. His index finger circumscribed slow circles around the gravityless disc with deVinci's preciseness. "Of course I won't. But I can send a force that will lick this thing, if it is a thing to be licked. That is what you must decide. I have asked you here to-night to sit as a jury, to pass judgement on an unknown world. Shall we eradicate a race of perhaps billions of thinking beings far more advanved than we on the possibility they will do us harm? And if you feel they would harm us, weigh this! Is the survival of our race more important to the universe than theirs? You must resolve that to-night!"

"But how can you do it?" persisted Bellsner.

Dr. Romlich produced a set of intricate blueprints and passed the sheaf to Bellsner. "Here is the plan of my atomic engine which will propel my rocket and breaks earth's gravity. *It has been built!*"

The atomic physicist examined the plans dubiously. At last, the sneer out of his voice, he spoke. "Dr. Romlich, your integrity and ingenuity is revered around the world. But there is not enough available U-235 in this country to take a rocket weighing more than twelve ounces to Venus using this engine, brilliant though it is."

A crafty smile lit Dr. Romlich's jagged features. "Our rocket weighs eighteen ounces, including the engine." He relished Bellsner's consternation a moment before going on. "Scientists in Russia," trusting my sincerity, smuggled out a goodly share of her uranium for this project, so your calculation was correct."

Bellsner was relieved, his infallibility vindicated. "But that leaves you seven ounces of passenger or cargo space, including the ship's shell. Even a hydrogenic warhead in that compartment would do little more than blow a crater four miles across on Venus."

"Good grief!" cried Witman "don't blow up Venus! Think of the gravitational imbalance in our solar system. We'd likely get dragged nearer the sun. Consider the seasonal changes!"

"Exactly," said Dr. Romlich.

"Then how in the world do you propose the elimination of these men?"

The rocket specialist fumbled in his lower desk drawer. "I shall only

wipe out this civilization if you say it should be done, remember that. Think deeply! Hugo? Madame Loes? Reverend Doctor Faulconer? I personally shall vote against this annihilation. But if you jurors decide it must be done, here is my plan. I shall propel my rocket to Venus; one pound, two ounces. The rocket will carry a head which will fragment without explosion on contact. Venus is warm; I believe it is moist. Therefore my two hundred passengers should thrive and multiply. They are descended from the army that devoured the original voyagers. I have bred them to adjust to the high temperatures of Venus. Shall I dispatch them?" He held aloft a pint mason jar.

"Ingenious!" cooed Eva Loes. "Anopheles mosquitoes!"

Editorial ——★

(*Continued from page* 8)

SCIENCE STORIES with its fourth issue (part of the weathering), we are left with UNIVERSE, the newest title of all. This isn't right! So, since our readers keep telling us what a grand magazine good old OW was, we're going to give it back to them! Next month, go out and buy OTHER WORLDS, not UNIVERSE! Under no circumstances buy UNIVERSE.

Listening to our TV the other day, we heard someone say Einstein regretted being a scientist, and if he had it all to do over again, he'd be something else, like a plumber or bricklayer. Then we heard something about Winston Churchill saying the invention of the atom and hydrogen bombs was a mistake. Later we heard something about a group of scientists saying scientists had low morale, because of the security restrictions, and even when they worked at making weapons such as the bomb, and newer things, it was with lack of enthusiasm and lack of real mental application which was a detriment to achievement. Everywhere you turn you hear the same thing: a sort of remorse because of what we've done in the line of science and morality.

Science as a career, today, is regarded with something approaching abhorrence. It is beginning to burst out all over at the seams that this is so, and we hear more and more people admitting it. As for your editor, don't say we didn't tell you so. Not that we want to talk up anything we've said, but aside from being an

editor and a publisher, we have always been a believer in God. We have always thought it a good idea to obey the Ten Commandments. We admit we've broken about eight of them . . . no, make it nine, because after all, the Fifth Commandment doesn't say "except animals, fish, bugs and etcetera". Not that we go so far as to advocate not slapping that fly contaminating your slice of bread; but when it comes to shooting a duck, or a squirrel, or a pheasant, we just can't do it. We even feel guilty about fish—but as an alibi we remember that it says somewhere that fish feel no pain.

The fact of the matter is that science has been diverted in our modern time to more and more destruction rather than construction. We brag about our freezers, clothes washers, automobiles, farm tractors and electric motors. But they are puny thinks beside our hydrogen bombs, our nike rockets, our enormously terrible and wonderfully constructed weapons! Have you ever seen the inside of a "homing submarine torpedo"? It is fantastic beside the insides of a home freezer! The genius instilled in each one is beyond comparison. An abject idiot can build a home freezer, compared to the brains necessary to build a guided missile (to say nothing of a hydrogen bomb).

Isn't it a horrible thing to contemplate, to realize the extent to which our wonderful scientific ability is being given over to the breaking of the Ten Commandments? Specifically to the Fifth Commandment? Thou shalt not kill. But today our greatest ability of all is to kill. En masse! Millions at one blow! The entire population of the world if need be! Now! Within our proven ability; an accomplished fact! We can, in a matter of weeks, set up a series of bomb explosions (in any remote desert), and by that simple act, eliminate the human race (and the animal and vegetable world also)! What are we *thinking* of!

That, of course, is the answer: We *aren't* thinking! No thinking being would even consider an atomic war. No reasoning being would be unaware of the impossibility of waging one and continuing to exist, much less winning. No person with any moral instinct could justify the dropping of a bomb on human beings whose only fault is being a *baby* or a helpless *woman,* or an *invalid.* No God-fearing creature could even contemplate the killing of such, and call it "war." No human being, sitting in judgment upon himself, could claim that such a thing ad-

vanced *any* purpose, even that of military victory. Only one definition can be put on such an act: murder!

Many of our scientists today (practically ALL of them) are people who became scientists out of a love of humanity, and from a burning desire to *improve* the world. It is the very nature of being a scientist. Now they are facing the fact that their efforts have been, and are being ever more increasingly directed, toward the *detriment* of humanity. If they "had it to do over again", they would never aspire to being scientists; heaven forbid! They would be laborers, depending on muscle to earn a living, and hoping that by limiting their tools to muscle alone, they would be rendered incapable of committing the gigantic sins that intense mental exercise enables them to commit. "If thine own hand offend thee, cut it off!" There, from the Bible, we have the precise feeling that is overwhelming our men of science today. They look aghast at their own hands and, caught in the trap of "politics", desire to cut them off to prevent further transgression.

This isn't the answer! The answer is a simple one, direct and unpervertable. To cut off your hand so that you may not strike your fellow man is the least noble thing to do. It is not fitting of true manhood. It may take great physical bravery, or great self-renunciation. but in essence, it is cowardice. Scientists (and all men) must now face the facts of life and *act* upon them with all their *brain power!* If you regret that you have built a bomb, you cannot shirk your responsibilty, flee from it, and leave it in the hands of the imbecile. You have two courses—control it, or destroy it. Since the principle of its manufacture is now a simple thing, you cannot destroy it. So, you must control it. Not the politicians of the world, but the scientists. And yet, not the scientists alone, but the scientists *and* the politicians.

Today you scientists are complaining of "security regulations". You are living in fear of what a politician can do to you if you violate the "security" restrictions laid down by the politicians. You are being doubly a coward. Speak up! You know the truth about the bomb, about atomic energy! You know there's "no place to hide". You know that of all the things scientists can do, there is one thing he CAN'T do—and that is to do anything about radioactivity.

What are the FACTS about what will happen when atoms are used for war? What are the facts about what will happen when

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atoms are used for peace? What is the danger of radioactivity, no matter for what atomic power is used? The people of the world have trusted the scientists. Now they demand to know the truth. There is no "secret" concerning something that will determine our future; whether it is to live or to die; advance in civilization or regress; do rightly or wrongly. There is no "security" in ignorance. This is a free country. It is not a violation of "security" to PROVE by actual demonstration (via mathematics or equally reliable methods), that 2000 atom bombs (or whatever the total number is) will render the human race sterile. It is not a betrayal of your country to demonstrate that radioactive by-products cannot be disposed of on his planet; and that they are cumulative.

It is as much your duty, and under your code of honor (in the sense as a physician's oath), to point toward a danger if it exists, and to guard against it. You cannot place the bomb in our hands, give us the atomic reactor, and then doff your laboratory robe

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and leave us holding the bag, fleeing like a common coward to the non-responsible position of a "ditch-digger".

It is being noised around, via the grapevine of rumor, that the radioactivity "level" has been doubled; that 2000 bombs would raise it to "intolerance," that large scale use of atomic energy for power would achieve the same "intolerance", given enough time. Either scotch those rumors with positive proof, or back them up. It is OUR future, our lives our children you are dealing with. You have no right to be silent, or to shirk the noble purpose for which you first became a scientist.

In the event that anyone thinks this editor is "talking through his hat", we want to point out that in any library you can secure scientific textbooks which will declare positively that radioactivity is highly dangerous, that it is only a short way toward an intolerable "level." You can also determine from weather bureau and scientific laboratory records, that extremely dangerous levels have been recorded repeatedly in populous areas even with only one bomb being tested. The exact recorded activity, placed side by side with actual scientific experiments and declarations of danger by reputable scientists, can be shown to be horribly dangerous, and not "negligible" at all. If the levels recorded *are* harmless, it is very easy to prove it by subjecting test animals to those levels under careful laboratory conditions, for a suitable time, to see whether or not the animal remains perfectly healthy. We *want* such assurances, not just pronouncements by politicians and soldiers who have an axe to grind. We want the word of the man who *knows*, the scientist himself. We have a right to know. And if the Russian government is proceeding toward an atomic war in ignorance of a threat to human existence, we should certainly do everything we can to see that they get that information also, as well as our own people.

We may be entirely wrong, not being scientists, in our fears. But we want to be proved wrong, not ignored. We don't tell our children that playing with matches is not dangerous. And if they ask us if playing with matches is dangerous, we don't just ignore them, or silence them with a threat of a spanking because we don't want them to know that it was a match we used to burn down our neighbor's barn because we were mad at him.

Mr. Churchill, WHY was inventing the bomb a mistake? Mr. Einstein, WHY do you regret hav-

ing been the scientist who showed the politicians that an atom bomb could be invented? You followers in the footsteps of Madame Curie, WHY was radioactivity such a terrible danger some years ago, and the *same* levels "negligible" today? The English scientist who recently published a book saying that a *total* of 2000 atom bombs exploded (not just at one time, but *altogether*) would raise the level of the atmosphere's radioactivity to "intolerable" levels, WHY isn't your book read into the records of the congresses of the world?

Are these all lies? Along with radioactive fish in Japanese waters, radioactive rain in Chicago, radioactive pork being seized in Florida?

We, the people are your government. We're not all fools. We'll listen if you think we're taking the wrong road, and are endangering our very existence in our ignorance. If you've got something to say, come out and say it. All of you, not just one or two.

And may we suggest a revision in our government's cabinet to include a "Secretary of Science", to be a top man with a competent and diversified staff of associates and advisers, with the power to place an advisory hand on the policies of our government when they are not proceeding along perfectly safe channels? As long as the scientists are so vital to our "security", let's make them a vital part of the governing factors that are dedicated to that security!

Government is no longer a matter solely of statesmanship, but a matter of competent scientific management. The technician shapes the instruments of civilization, and the technician should operate those instruments, in perfect collaboration with the statesman, whose business *should* be the moral evaluation of the purpose and use of the machine. It is indeed strange that the situation is reversed, and the builder has nothing to say to the user. With every machine the mechanic provides a "set of instructions", in order to avoid misuse of the machine.

Let's quit playing with matches like kids!

—*Rap.*

The Atomic Age ••••••SEX MURDERS

By

Ray Palmer

Author's note: This is a true story. It takes place in the near future insofar as time is concerned. Dr. Rhine of Duke University has proved that precognition is a fact, and has established it scientifically. It has also taken place in the distant past, as a fact, established by the Bible. (Genesis 1:28— . . . and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth . . .) To your author's knowledge, no one has ever read this passage from the Bible and bothered to understand it. So, for the first time in history, I will explain it to you simply and understandably, giving you its meaning in unequivocal terms, factually and flatly, as defined by the Funk & Wagnall New Practical Standard Dictionary. The word with which we are most concerned is *replenish*. (Replenish: to fill again, as something that has been emptied; to repeople.) If you believe the Bible is the word of God, then you must take this word as the Bible gives it: which means nothing more than a plain statement that before Adam and Eve the world was populated, it somehow lost its population, and Adam and Eve were placed on Earth and commissioned to repopulate it. This is the story of that depopulation. Except for the fact that names and places have been changed to protect the innocent, this story is taken from the files of racial memory and/or precognition. It has happened before . . . But that is in YOUR hands.

* * *

IT happened a long time ago— or was it tomorrow? No mat-

ter—it happened!

It was raining. Hard. It was raining harder than it had ever rained before in weather-bureau history. Said the Chicago weather authorities; "No matter what the records will show, this has been the worst rainfall (6.88 inches) in Chicago history."

Said the Atomic Energy Commission: "The radiation level (on that day) was twenty times normal. . ."

Said the man in the street: "I never saw such lousy weather!"

Said Jehovah: "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Said Dr. David R. Inglis, physicist at the Argonne National Laboratory, Lemont, Illinois: "There should be a ban on H-bomb tests to give scientists some time to work on more effective defense measures. It would also prevent the H-bomb race from becoming a many-sided affair, for no other powers can independenly develop H-bombs *without making tests*. It would take *only one mistake* to destroy civilization as we know it."

Said the Russians: "To hell with you. We are onto your propaganda. You wish to make it appear as if the atmospheric radioactive level is being raised to a dangerous degree so that we do not duplicate your H-bomb tests for fear of rendering the people of Earth sterile. Also, to say that one test could do it is typical bourgeois misrepresentation of fact."

Said Curie (from beyond the grave): "I wish I had known radioactivity was so fatal . . . "

Said Eyve, daughter of the greatest scientist of the planet Venus: That metor fell very near here! If I can find it, Mother will be very proud of me, and perhaps she will let me look at the atomic explosions on our nearest neighbor in space . . . " With which words she donned her swim suit (for Venus was a very wet world) and began splashing in the general direction of the red flame she had seen. And quite luckily, she found her "meteor". That is, it was lucky for Joe Stone . . .

THE first intimation Joe Stone had to indicate that he had landed safely on Venus (if a crash landing can be called safe), was someone fumbling at his space helmet, and finally succeeding in undoing it. In the process of having the helmet removed from his head, Joe's view of the landscape of

Venus was obscured by a rather bewildering expanse of quite attractive white skin, plastered over with ornamental starfish which (it became at once obvious) were not *real* starfish. At his first clear view of both girl and starfish, Joe said "Wow!. He followed this quite quickly with: "If that isn't the Bikini to end all Bikinis . . . "

All of this brought him to two quite impressive realizations. One: he had arrived on Venus (obviously!); and Two: the Bikinis (and the Kwajaleins and Siberias and Australias) of Earth were all too real. He felt at once sad and heartened — and then just sad again; because he remembered what those experiments on Earth had done to *him*. But at the moment, he discovered his immediate objective must be to see more of what he was seeing—so, with as swift motions as possible, considering he was lying up to his waist in water, jammed in between two rocks, he aided his rescuer in completing the removal of the helmet.

"You doll, you!" he said.

Eyve answered him, but of course he didn't understand a word of what she was saying.

"How about a kiss?" he suggested.

Apparently she did not understand his Earthian any more than he understood her Venusian. She made no move to comply.

He struggled to his feet and stood knee-deep in the water. For a few seconds he looked at the wrecked spaceship from which he had been catapulted when it split open, then, reluctant to waste further time in inspecting what obviously was just junk, he returned his gaze to far more interesting scenery.

"I suppose your reaction to my suggestion isn't unusual," he remarked. "The girls on Earth did exactly the same — except that they had a good reason. They were, paradoxically speaking, atomically cold. They had a new wrinkle on an old saying: Once burned, twice shy. And it's sad, but all Earth girls today are shy . . . the essentials, that is. When they die off, that'll be all. But you . . . "

Swift regret clouded his features as he remembered. He shrugged. "I don't blame you, doll, for not rising to the occasion. I'm just as burned as my former girl friends. Quite a fruitless proposition, you might say . . .

He listened intently as the lovely Venusian before him spouted a long dissertation. Then he frowned. "Doll, let's get down to cases. I know that in situations like this, it is always customary to go through about six months of tedious learning of each other's language (which strangely enough is

hurdled in a few paragraphs), so let's just skip those few paragraphs and give it a go in English.

She looked at him, then smiled. "I was always an apt pupil in school."

"Fine!" he exclaimed. "Now we can get this all thrashed out. First, I'm from Earth, and I . . . "

"Let's go see Mother first," she interrupted him. "I thought you were a meteor . . . "

"Thanks for the kindness," he said wryly, "but even in my prime I was never a ball of fire. And as for your mother, I thing there are a few things you ought to know, first. Let's not rush this thing. Remember that old saw: repent at leisure."

"You're jumping to conclusions," she said. "Just like all men. What I mean is that Mother will be very interested in seeing you. I'm sure you can make her very happy by explaining what all the fuss on Earth is with all those big explosions."

"The fuss," said Joe slowly, "is all over. The firecrackers were hotter than we expected, and now we're just a bunch of punks. A lot of celebration, and now no place to go."

"We'll go to Mother," she said.

"Okay, let's get going," he agreed. "But just how do we go?" He looked over the expanse of water.

"Can you swim?"

"No."

"Well, then, lie on your back in the water, and I'll tow you—but you'll have to take off that space suit . . ."

"Do I have to?" he objected.

"What have you got to lose?" she argued.

"I get your point," he said. "But your unwitting remark makes me very sad . . . " He climbed out of the suit and stood in the water in his long red underwear. "They said it would be cold in space," he explained apologetically.

She looked disgusted. "You'll tow like a dead mackerel."

"There are limits," he said defiantly, "if you are suggesting things. I'll paddle with my feet, which ought to help some. So let's get on our way." He lay down in the water and relaxed.

"At least you know how to float," she said. She placed one palm under his chin and began spashing forward. He stared back along their wake at the forlorn portion of his space ship still protruding from the water.

MOTHER, it turned out, looked exactly like her daughter, except she had a little more of it. The net result was a truly pathetic expression on Joe's face. "Worse and worse." he moaned.

"Are you insulting my mother!" demanded Eyve, glaring at him.

"Y o u ' r e overestimating me again," he said. "I certainly was not insulting her. My remark was born of extreme regret. The more I see of this world, the more I wish I'd known about it a couple of years ago when there'd have been some sense to this trip."

Eyve's mother looked at Joe calculatingly. "Why not tell Mama all about it?" she suggested.

"You mean . . . you might be able to do something . . . about it?" he asked, hope springing eternally in his human breast.

"I didn't say anything remotely resembling doing anything about anything", she said. "I just want to hear your story."

"Okay," he said, his shoulders slumping in dejection once more. "I'll feed it to you as briefly as possible. Even a monkey could understand it now!"

"I'm not a monkey," said Eyve's mother.

He eyed her appraisingly. "I'll say you're not! But to get on with my sad story, your daughter has been telling me you've been watching us shoot off our firecrackers on Earth and wondering what we were up to. Well, explaining that is rather difficult. It seems it was a matter of defense against a war that might end civilizaton. A lot of the boys got the idea that it was really a menace, and they got into a one-track mental rut and began making bigger and better blasts on the theory that if they made them big enough, not even the biggest bully would dare start a commotion that might wreck things.

"Funny thing about the whole business was that even a lot of guys knew how dangerous radioactivity was, and how it wasn't exactly smart to dump it into the atmosphere by the truckload. But who ever heard of a general or a politician with ears? Their mouths are so big there's no room for ears, and even if they had 'em, the sound of rushing hot air would drown everything else out. Oh yeah, there were scientists who raised their voices, but it was easy to call them subversive and banish them to the bricklayers union.

"It all began, you might say, in a tuna can. . ."

"A tuna can?" interrupted Mama. "What is a tuna can?

"It's a can of fish. The Japs used to catch a lot of them, tin them, and sell them to the Americans. But after the first big bombs in the Pacific, they got radioactive 'the fish that is,' and the deal was off. The Japs yelled as loud as they could, but mainly about how they were going broke without their fishing industry.

"It wasn't until after a few doz-

en more H-bomb tests that people began to notice that they were more lit up than usual after a drinking spree (and on water, at that!). Some of them glowed in the dark. At first it was attributed to romance by the experts, until somebody noticed it was the older people who were glowing the most, and that sort of squashed that theory.

"I guess you can see what the end of my story is going to be, so let's skip all the stuff in the middle. The big come-down came when the Reds suddenly got pacifistic, joined the disarament program, and began yelling for an end to the tests. Of course, nobody believed them at first, wolf-callers that they were, so a lot more tests were tested. Even then we knew they were dangerous, but somebody had set a tolerance level, a level above which it was half-way safe to go to, and we hadn't reached it yet. When suddenly somebody discovered that the level had been set too high through a mistake by Uniac (which had become depraved by going into politics,) it was too late. The real clincher came when the baby food trusts began bellyaching to the government about the lack of a market for their products. It seems they wanted to be subsidized like everybody else was. But the government wasn't having any —especially since there weren't any babies being born.

"That's when the firecrackers stopped. . ."

"I wondered about that," said Mama.

"Well now you know. Anyway, the starkly told truth is that everybody and everything on Earth is sterile. I don't know who got the silly idea that going to Venus would help any, but here I am, and there you are."

"There I am, nothing," said Mama flatly.

Eyve looked at her mother, and Joe noticed there was a tear glinting on her eyelash, for which he suddenly felt greatful. "But Mother," she said. "You're the smartest scientist on Venus. Isn't there anything that can be done?"

"Oh, sure," said Mama. "There's an answer of course. This isn' the first time a thing like this has happened. According to our lab files, it happened on Earth once before, about 7,500 years ago. Our ancesters fixed things up then, and I guess we can again."

Wild with incredulous hope, Joe rushed up to her and grasped her by the lapels. "Mama!" he exclaimed. "Do you really mean that!"

"Get your paws off me!" she exclaimed. "Or I'll be hanged if I bother."

Joe mumbled apologetically, and

stepped back, but the gleam remained in his eyes, and he let them rove speculatively up and down Eyve's architecture. She returned his gaze calculatingly for a moment, then said: "Can you really do something, Mama?"

Mama shrugged. "I wouldn't be surprised. Why don't you two run off and have fun while I go through the records?"

"Shall we go for a swim?" suggested Eyve.

"In my red underwear?" asked Joe.

She l o o k e d disgusted. "I wouldn't be seen dead in that!"

IT was quite some time later when Mama called them from their play and bade them be seated. Then, while they looked at her expectantly, she opened a book before her and looked at it reflectively for a moment.

"I'll give it to you straight," said Mama. "It says that the radioactivity level will return to normal on Earth in about 1500 years, and then we can send a couple of Venusians there, as we did before, and let nature take its course."

"Fifteen hundred years!" exclaimed Joe. "But that isn't going to do me any good!"

Mama looked at him disgustedly. "You men are all alike," she said acidly. "Give them a perfect setup, and they still complain. What do you want, butter on your bread? Now get out of here before I lose my patience."

"But what'll we do?" asked Joe.

"Oh, go for another swim!" Mama said resignedly.

After a moment of silence, Joe rose to his feet and beckoned to Eyve. "Let's go, doll." They began to walk away.

"Just one moment," said Mama. "One thing. . ."

Joe whirled back toward her in hope. "What is it?"

"Isn't there something wrong with your underwear?"

"There sure is!" said Joe defiantly. "It's shrinking like the dickens in all this water. It's darn near choking me."

"I should think it would be," agreed Mama. "But there's one thing you can do for that. . ."

"What?"

"Listen, son, this is Venus, not Earth. And frankly, I'm getting sick of seeing you wandering around looking like a wet firecracker."

Joe drew himself up to his full height. He glared at her. "That Madam," he said, "is a low blow!"

He turned and stalked away.

Didn't I tell you Earthmen had no brains?

* * *

(*Continued on page* 131)

THE CLUB HOUSE

By Rog Phillips

TO those of you who have never published a fanzine — don't. I say that with the memory of a horrible experience fresh in my thoughts. You see, I wrote an article that had to be gone over by quite a few people before it can even be considered for publication anywhere, and for the convenience of those who were to go over it, each of those people needed three copies. So the final draft of the article went onto ditto stencils — all eighteen pages. I learned how much effort it takes to make every letter strong and clear for good reproduction. There were symbols used that had to be drawn in because they aren't on the typewriter keyboard. Even with great care to make them perfect they came out far from good. The experience taught me once again not to judge a fanzine from the god-like position of a Reviewer looking down on the little world of stf fans. The worst fanzine in the world took the heart and enthusiastic effort of a human being to bring into existence. A human being who wants friends and is willing to go far more than half way to get them and keep them. Did you ever stop to realize that that is the most basic attribute of the science fiction fan? A desire to have a lot of friends. An audience, perhaps, but an audience that talks back. Brothers and sisters, in a sense, disagreeing with him at times, seldom praising, never fawning.

I have a book I'm going to review which brings this family facet of fandom home to me quite vividly. The pictures in this book are as nostalgic as a family snapshot album. There's one picture of Edd Cartier, Hannes Bok, and Ted Sturgeon together — much younger than they are now. One of Willy Ley when his hair wasn't so grey. One of 4e Ackerman at the First World Science Fiction Convention, in New York in 1939, when 4e was hardly more than a kid. There's even one of Sam Moskowitz when he was thin! And Bob Tucker when he owned a mimeo.

Lester Del Rey "who was a famous fan under the name Raymond Alvarez Del Rey" back about the time he was fry cook in a hamburger jernt. A picture of Ray Palmer at about the time he was writing stories like "Red Hot Lipstick" for the true confessions magazines.

I don't have to read the book to know its contents. I read every word when it appeared in several dozen installments in a fanzine published by Dr. A. Langley Searles.

The Immortal Storm by Sam Moskowitz is the history of fandom from its earlier beginnings to Pearl Harbor, and is a fitting title. It has taken years to bring out this book. The index to it alone took more work than most books. More fascinating than any novel, in all its plots, intrigues, movements, its characters are still alive. In this book you can read of scientists, editors, some of the world's best writers, when they were gangly kids.

It's a hard cover book, 270 pages in fine print, well worth the cost of five dollars. I've paid more for textbooks with half the quality of paper and binding. I, personally, don't think you should be without this book. That's why I'm reviewing, it. It's already published. You don't have to wait for umpteen months to get it. Send your five dollars to Carson F. Jacks, 713 Coventry Road, Decatur, Georgia, and you will receive your copy immediately. Credit is certainly due the Atlanta Science-Fiction Organization Press for having brought out this monumental book — but send them a check or money order.

My experimental letter department seems to have acquired a Whooper rating or something. Let's try it some more. Here's one:

Dear Rog:

You are a crackpot. I have been itching to tell you this for some time.

Jim Harmon, Editor
X Science Fiction
427 E. 8th St.
Mt. Carmel, Ill.

You guys that scratch for a living . . . . — Rog

And from Los Angeles comes a new voice.

My dear Mr. Phelps:

His Name is PAUL COATES!!! With a "C", not a "K". Doubtless Mr. Coates himself will write you a short note. Something caustic, I suppose.

C. J. Williamson
1845 Pontius Ave.
Los Angeles 25, Cal.

Mr. Cotes chickened out, C. J. . . — Rog

Why is it that registered mail always comes on Saturday when a person is not home, so that the no-

tice is there to make you worry until Monday? It happened to me I saw the notice ten minutes before the P. O. closes, so rushed down to get the letters. It was still with the mailman on his route, so I cruised the streets until I located him. It was worth it. The registered article was a copy of one of the pocket novels I asked for. It had come all the way from Cuba, airmail registered, costing the sender a dollar and seventeen cents. People who do things like that are tops. There was a letter with the book.

Dear Rog:

In reading the Nov. *Universe* I ran across your request for "Time Trap" and "Worlds Within." I don't have an extra issue of the former, but am enclosing a copy of the latter.

As I am a long way from home, my stf are somewhat late in getting to me. In payment for it send me any back issues of any stf mag you happen to have (pre '51, post '45), as they are difficult to get down here. Also I would appreciate any correspondence from fellow sfiacs (stf maniacs.)

Et al,
Frank Proenza
16 No. 316, Apto 310
Vedado, Habana, Cuba

Thanks, Frank. I am sending you all the review of fanzines for this issue. — Rog.

There were several people who sent me copies of the two pocket novels. I needed. Thanks, all of you. I foolishly hadn't saved any, and I am going to need them in the near future for re-publication.

The last item on the letter front this time is a sinister growl from the east coast.

Dear Rog:

Okay, pal — you'll learn.

Joe Gibson
24 Kensington Ave.
Jersey City, 4, N. J.

Down, boy. — Rog

Joe Gibson seems to feel strongly that New York has something to offer. For the life of me I can't see it. In other cities the big worry is whether the club getting the convention will live long enough to put it on. If the convention went to New York the big worry would be whether the survivors of the battle to gain control of the convention would be in any condition to put on a successful one. Their favorite pastime seems to be cutting one another's throats, as the recent Metrocon so vividly illustrated. Part of the time two separate N. Y. area groups were putting out notices for the Metrocon that didn't agree. One part of N. Y. fandom seems to be motivated largely by contempt for the other part, and that other part seems to be motivated by resentment of that contempt. The specific complaint concerning the Metrocon is that the

planning of the convention was tured over to the American Science Fantasy Society, and then after that group had gone ahead with their plans, and gotten their notices into various publications it was taken out of the hands of the ASFS entirely. Of course, this is just one side of the picture. There are other charges against New York, made by New Yorkers themselves. Charges I wouldn't print in this column even if I thought they were true. But it all adds up to one thing; New York, currently and in the past, has received nothing but unfavorable publicity, and has done little to correct it. Maybe that unfavorable publicity is true. Maybe Joe Gibson and Dave Kyle and Sam Moskowitz and Lester Del Rey, et al, couldn't put on a world convention without a dozen different clubs demanding to take charge and without a dozen different clubs trying to cut one another's throats. Could be if New York got the vote there would be half a dozen different world conventions competing with one another at the same time. Certainly they couldn't *all* be in full charge, the chairman of each group with his lips closer to the one mike of publicity. It's a problem I frankly doubt that New York can ever meet effectively. Most of fandom doubts it to. That's why I'm going to make this offer to Dave Kyle, Joe Gibson, Sam Moscowitz, and Lester Del Rey, specifically. If you and your group think you could put on a successful convention, the pages of the CLUB HOUSE will be open to you during the rest of this year until the Ohohocon to make your point. I would like to know, and I think fandom would like to know, especially, *who* would put on the convention, *who* would be chairman of the committee, *who* would work with him. If it's one of you four, fine. If it's someone else, fine — if you settle it and stick to it. It doesn't have to be a compromise that pleases everyone. Let's get something concrete instead of dire rumblings, Joe. Put up something. I'm calling your bluff.

And now, having disposed of accumulated correspondence, on to the fanzine reviews.

DESTINY: 35c; Earl Kemp, 3508 N. Sheffield Ave., Chicago 13, Ill. . Summer 1954 issue, but it came out November 1st, and no wonder, since it's a photo-offset job with 64 pages that has probably never been surpassed by any fanzine of any era. A Chesley Bonestell cover and a Hannes Book back cover, a portfolio of fantasy art with ten original prints, each of which is worth framing,, and original short stories by Bob Bloch, Philip Jose Farmer, illustrated by Lin Carter, a biography of Leigh

Bracket, and so many other things that it's useless to begin a review. About the time this hits the stands Earl will have ready an index of all stories and authors and stf magazines of 1953 with his usual completist mania . . You could pay a dollar for Destiny and still have a bargain. Somehow, I liked Frank Robinson's, "Quarter in the Slot," best. The best thing Frank ever wrote— and it's in a fanzine!

FANTASTIC WORLDS: 30c; S. J. Sackett, 411 W. 6th St., Hays, Kansas. Spring and fall issues on hand, and there's a world of difference in them. What happened? Sam, you can't fill your mag with book reviews and the life story of a writer who lived two hundred years ago and expect to survive in this live age. Not with a professional print job at 30c.

SAUCERIAN: 35c; Gray Barker, Box 2228, Clarksburg, W. Va. A professional print job this issue, and it deserves the format. Obviously patterned after Charles Fort in technique, it is intensely interesting in every one of its forty pages. The "Wild Rumor" department interested me most. "Dozens of cans of film labeled Interplanetary — Top Secrets were brought into the Eastman labs for processing — under guard." Whassa mat? The gummint no got film labs of its own? "A special branch of the Air Force, in PLAIN CLOTHES, whose main business is to collect photographs of flying saucers after they appear in newspapers . . . . . Wish I had a job like that.

But this one — "The saucers under inspection at Edwards Air Base were not captured but brought there by the saucer people. Ike himself took a look while on a supposed vacation nearby." I have it from very reliable sources that this is true.

OOPSLA! 15c; Gregg Calkins, 2817 11th St., Santa Monica. Calif . . An old standbye that holds up issue after issue. Mimeographed, with paper color that suits the mood of the story or article on it, which is nice. Naturally I pick Walt Willis's column, "The Harp That Once Or Twice" as the most interesting because Willis tells about his trip from Chicago to Los Angeles in my car after the Chicon to talk about, and I get the conversations and side issues I missed at the time because I was just too sick to know what went on. Walt paints pictures of my car going seventy and the road doing its best to swerve into place in front of me. Me, I drove unconciously and viciously, hoping the codeine and what few friendships I still had would last as far as Los Angeles. They didn't. But Willis only fell out of bed while sleeping with Webbert. I seem to remember how-

that he had choc malts at every stop, and couldn't eat ham and eggs after he ordered it because — suddenly — he remembered his family in Ireland couldn't have that immortal dish on a week's meat ration! Sentimental cuss . . . I guess Walt didn't get used to American distances. Seventy miles an hour is normal here. I drove a hundred miles per hour on the freeway in Pennsylvania on the way to and from Philcon, but don't tell anyone. There's some other things in Oopsla too . . .

NATIONAL FANTASY FAN: Subscription by membership to the NFFF, dues $1.60 per year: Merrill Malkerson, 2301 Damuth St., Oakland 2, Calif. . The NFFF, or National Fantasy Fan Federation, is perhaps the largest organization and the oldest in fandom. It has too many advantages to list here. Don Susan is the current prexy. The current issue gives voting results, and many other current activities of the NFFF. Their list of members includes a large proportion of the active fans. One of their most noteworthy activities is the manuscript bureau which provides original stories and articles for other fan publilshers.

They have other publications such as

THE PENDULUM: August 1954; 10c; Merrill Malkerson, 2301 Damuth St., Oakland 2, Calif. Joe Gibson has an article on astronavigation. Janie Lamb gives with current reports on NFFF as its secretary. Still no fiction, but plenty of articles on fan activities of all sorts.

ALPHA: 60c per year in mint stamps; Wim Stuyck, 40c, Molenvyver, Rotterdam, Holland. What do you know! It's in very American English, however. And the contents page gave the impression that it's American, even though published in Europe. It's extremely interesting to read of the spread of stf in Europe in Alpha, and see its close blending with American and British stf, and fandom. The world grows smaller . . .

PEON: 10c; Charles Lee Riddle,, 108 Dunham St., Norwich, Connecticut: Issue no. 32, Sept., 1954. It's been around for a long time and shows no signs of defuncting. Each issue has good stuff in it that makes you want to come back for more. This issue has Jim Harmon, Terry Carr, T. E. Watkins, Carol McKinney, Vernon L. McCain, Ian T. Macauley, and Lawrence Stark, with a cover by Jerry Bixby. Just noticed the November issue is on hand too. An article by Isaac Aismov hit my eye. "Why Can't the Author Meet His Critics?" A nice article, pointing up the frustration a writer feels towards an unfavorable book review because he can't defend him-

self from it.

The Riddles have a new baby, Alice Elizabeth Riddle, born August 8th. Congratulations, Lee.

MAD COMBINED WITH A LA SPACE: 15c Kent Corey, Box 64, Enid, Oklahoma. Excellent mimeography and some really terrific fan artwork. There are three stories in the September 1954 issue. They are seemingly unrelated stories, but they have a connection, and that connection is a story outside a story. The three stories are written by Dick Geis, Harlan Ellison, and Shel Deretchin. Oklahoma has quite an active fan group. They put on a local convention last fall and are planning on bidding for the 1956 convention to be in Oklahoma City. That has nothing to do with this fanzine, however. It's a good mimeographed job, with plenty of entertainment in its 24 pages.

TART: 10c; George Jennings, 11121 Tascosa Dr., Dallas, Texas. Another good fanzine of the type that doesn't have any one thing outstanding about it, but you enjoy every page. Bob Stewart's story, "The Flood," for example. It's maybe six hundred words long, but it alone is worth more than the dime.

NITE CRY: 10c; Don Chappell, 5921 E. 4th Place, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The August issue is as good as the past issues that have come my way. When you have eight or ten guys and gals work to get out a fanzine you have entertainment plus. "Unto Dust I Descend," by Jann Hickey is a really terrific mood story. The letter column and fanzine reviews take up a lot of space, but they hold interest.

PHOBOS: ISFANEWS: 5c; biweekly; Lee Anne Tremper, 1022 N. Tuxedo St., Indianapolis 1, Indiana. Jean Bogart gives an account on the SFCon at San Francisco. On the whole it was a very successful convention from all reports, and Jean gives a highly interesting and detailed account of it. In 1955 the convention is in Cleveland, Ohio, which is centrally located and should produce an even bigger and better convention. Another Indiana fanzine is

ISFA: 15c; Edward McNulty, 5645 N. Winthrop St., Indianapolis, Indiana; sponsored by the Indiana Science Fiction Association. A heavy paper yellow cover with a very good cover illo and lots of illustrations and artwork scattered through the 30 pages. The four stories are all good, but Jack Harness takes top place with a story idea he should be proud of. However, "Dominant Race" by Noah McLeod is the best written story in the issue.

KAYMAR: 10c; the tradezine of fandom; K. Martin Carlson,

1028 Third Ave. So, Moorhead, Minnesota. This is the magazine for you if you have stf books and magazines to buy, sell, or trade. Currently Gerry de la Ree advertises a lot of magazines and stf pocketbooks for sale, and several pages of books, all at reasonable prices. Some of them are unbelieveable bargains if I know anything about it.

CANADIAN FANDOM: 15c; Gerald Steward, 166 McRoberts Ave., Toronto 10, Ontario. September issue. Bill Stavdal defends MAD, the comic book, and Howard Lyons attacks it, in two articles. I'm for Howard, because I think *Mad* is the ultimate in poor taste and the depths of crudity. Don Ford has an article, "The Indian Lake Story," which tells about the annual convention held there, the midwestcon. Most of the fans in the midwest have gotten into the habit of attending that convention every spring.

NUCLEONICS: 10c; L. S. Bourne, 3709 S. E. Hawthorne, Portland, Oregon. Larry's fanzine is dittoed with two colors, and on both sides of the paper. The illos by Bradley and Bourne are good Bradley is good enough so that he ought to make money at it. In fact, I would say that this zine is more artwork than anything else. Only thing not by Bradley or Bourne is a poem by Terry Carr, "I Have Been Here Before."

IMAGINE THAT!: no price listed; Ray Youstra Jr., 10441 Central Park, Chicago 43, Illinois. A first issue, dittoed on one side of the paper only, eighteen pages, and an excellent job. Marie Young and Gerry Martin worked with Ray, and it's as good a first issue as I've ever seen—better than lots of fanzines that have been around a while. Ray himself has a rather odd shape. He's three feet tall and seven feet wide, he says, and completely blue all over except for orange spots. A typical fan, I would say. There is some good material in this first issue. "The House," by Bob Linden is full of suspense. Also some serious stuff like the discussion on space stations. Ray has material lined up for the next issue, so he will undoubtedly become a steady customer of this column.

TENTACLE: 10c; Maurice Lubin, 14 Jones St., Worcester, Mass., The next issue of Tentacle will have a new name. The New England Fan. In his editorial column, "Tentacly Speaking," Maurice mentions some other New England fen, including two in Boston who, "between them have 400 books and over 2500 magazines." I read this with surprise, then wondered why I was surprised, and suddenly realized that "banned in Boston" had unconsciously pro-

duced in me the impression that there were few if any books in Boston. Silly, isn't it? This issue of Tentacle has a "Con Questionaire" for anyone who would like to attend a convention held in the N. E. states. Where should a con be held? When? No reason why N. E. shouldn't have a convention. Send for Tentacle and fill out the sheet. That isn't all that's in *Ten*. It's a good fanzine, with artwork and departments and fan fantasy. But it's a must to you who live in N. E. to get and to fill in that questionaire and get somewhat organized. Think of what it would *do* to Boston to have the World Convention sometime — and what it would do to the convention to be forever after banned in Boston!

HYPHEN: Walt Willis, 170 Upper N'Ards, Rd., Belfast N. Ireland; this copy of Universe sent to him when you finish with it will bring you the next couple of issues of Hyphen. Any other prozine will do as well. Thirty-three pages of reading that you will find well worth sending for. Good illustrations scattered through the pages. Articles on hoaxers, psychic research, the British Interplanetary Society. In Grunch, by Vince Clarke, you get news censored from American papers. Did you know that there was a shooting war between Russia and the U. S. at Turin Italy recently? Yes! It was with water pistols, which the Russians had just discovered — in Turin toy shops! As Vince says in closing his article, those water pistols are a hopeful sign. Bought any good monsters lately? That's the title of a column by J. Stuart Mackenzie.

One more thing before closing shop. Ted White didn't get ZIP in in time for review, but in his letter he informs me of a new APA (amateur press association) that has been formed the last couple years. I's W. A. P. A., the Whimsical A. P. A .. "It differs from the other APAs in that each member mails his zine direct to the other members, and each member has a week assigned to him so that all members get a different fanzine once a week." That sounds like an ideal group. If it had fifty-two members each member would receive a zine once a year and publish his own zine once a year, fifty-two copies. With a year to put a zine together each member should be able to make it tops. Interested? Contact Larry Anderson, 2716 Smokey Lane, Billings, Montana — and enclose a self addressed stamped envelope.

That's all for this time. Send your zines in for review, either to *Universe*, or direct to me, Apt. 308, 6613 Normal, Chicago 21, Illinois.

ROG PHILLIPS

(*Concluded on page* 131)

LETTERS

Address:

Letters Dept.
UNIVERSE
Amherst, Wisc.

Dear Bea,

This will be my first letter to you since Other Worlds went the wrong way.

A comment first about issue No. 7. "Starmen Come Home" was wonderful. Sure, it was pure space opera, so what? It was still great.

I thought Tom Godwin's story, NO SPECIES ALONE, in number 8 was one of the best stories I've read in a long while. The short stories came out well, with OR GIVE ME DEATH, rating tops.

I have only one minor gripe, before the letter section. The Club House was 9½ pages long. A little over five pages Rog devoted to editorial. That, to my way of thinking, is too much. I believe that two or three pages would have been entirely sufficient. Thus leaving more room for the 'zine reviews.

Going back to the story; NO SPECIES ALONE, it was simply a superb job very well done. This is the kind of story they should make a movie, or TV story from. Of course they never will. It is indeed seldom that a pulp magazine suspense story will hold up for 35 pages. But that is exactly what Mr. Godwin's story accomplished. He very skillfully led the reader from one crisis to another. There were at least three points in the story when I didn't think my nerves would take much more. Perhaps I'm being a little naive about the whole thing, but I think that when a magazine publishes a story that good, someone should let them know about it.

I cannot truthfuly say that I like the cover. I too, would like to see some covers by Finlay.

While there wasn't a lot of good-art in the issue, I thot the illo for Caravan was about tops.

I'm sincerely happy to see the Clubhouse, Personals, and letter column back. Before too long, perhaps we'll have a magazine as good or better than Other Worlds.

Val Walker
6438 E. 4th Place
Tulsa 22, OKlahoma

Welcome back, Val, and I've got an idea you might be interested in. Sit down right now, read this issue, and send me a rush letter telling me what you think of it. The reason? Way back in the days of OW when I first started handling the letters column, one of the first letters I printed was from you. And your name kept popping up at the bottom of a letter to me shortly after each issue hit the stands, even though all of them may not have been included in the mag. Now, the next issue of this magazine is going to be re-titled OTHER WORLDS, and just to make it official, I'd like a Val Walker letter of praise and panning to head off the first Letters column of the issue. Then, instead of "Welcome back," I'll say "Welcome home to OW." Here's your Finlay, although I'll be among the first to state that a Finlay cover should be in full-color. —Bea

Dear Miss Mahaffey:

Finished the September issue of *Universe,* and "Starman Come Home" was marvelous. I couldn't put the mag down until I finished. The rest of the stories were passible.

Glad to see the Club House; seems like old times. Also, Personals. Very handy; never know when one has something or wants something. as all of us haven't complete series. As usual, the Letters column is interesting. First thing I head for.

The atmosphere of friendliness that was in OTHER WORLDS is fast becoming a reality in *Universe* — takes time to establish stability in a magazine.

Anyway, keep on printing stories like "Starman" and I'll be with you all the way along the Milky Way.

W. C. Brandt
1725 N. Seminary Avenue
Oakland, 21, California

In line with printing more stories like "Starman," we've asked Ed Hamilton to do a sequal. He's working on it now, and as fast as he gets it to us, we'll bring it to you. Yup, we brought back the OW features, the OW atmosphere, and now we're bringing back the title—OTHER WORLDS. Cycle completed, and now we're all set to move on to that bigger and better OW we kept promising you—Bea

Dear Editors:

I have just read 'the letter in your magazine from Richard Albert Erth and Betty Vignoles. I think that two people who seem so interested in stf and in making friends shouuld have a subscription to your magazine. I am including

$3.00 in this letter to provide at least one sub; I wish that I could afford two for them. Since there is enough for only one, however, I suggest you send it to the young man and have them share it. If there are extra charges because it is out of the country, please notify me and I shall send the balance. Exchanging magazines is a long, involved process, and one is always a few months behind. With this magazine at least, they can be up to date. I personally feel that $3.00 is a remarkably small price to extend some good will to another county. I wish that one were offered the opportunity more often to do so much for so little.

I would rather you would not print this letter, but if you do, do not use my name. My whole family are avid readers of stf, and we have read your magazines with great pleasure for many years. In my last few years at the University of Oregon I've found many like myself, who are not fanatic fans, but of the good, solid reader class. Your magazine is one which is mentioned often and well. Best of luck for its continued success.

(Name Withheld)

Okay, and Universe's editors will match this with another sub so both Richard and Betty have magazines. In fact, during January and February of this year we'll match any sub given by a reader as a gift. Just send in two names with each subscription. —Rap.

Notice that we're not printing your name, but if Richard or Betty write in asking for it, I'm going to send it to them, or forward their letters to you. By the way, while all of our magazines, and in particular OW (by now you must have seen the notices of our return to the OW title), have contained fan departments and been a "fan's prozine," without a lot of "good, solid readers" buying the mag each issue, there wouldn't be any magazine. So here's to more and more "good, solid readers" as well as more and more "fanatic fans"—one class makes the mazagine possible and the other makes it fun! —Bea

Dear Sirs:

Maturity throes or no maturity throes, if that is the kind of cover you expect me to swallow just because it's grown-up you've got another guess coming. It is by far one of the worst to grace the front of a science fiction magazine in all my years of collecting. I thought the cover you displayed for "Starman Come Home' was so low you couldn't possibly pull a worse one on us.*But you Did!*

Except for the covers, though, your magazine is making strides along the way upward. You at least are trying to pump a little life into your pages by keeping in contact

with the fans. The Club House plus the Letters has prompted me to return to the *Universe* fold. Of course the story in your September issue, "Terwilliger and the War Machine" piqued my interest a little bit.

I've noticed that you put out an issue every so often with practically all of the stories illustrated by Lawrence, Finlay, etc., making a nice well rounded looking magazine. Then, *wham!* you hit us with issues illustrated by one, or at the most two artists. Why not spread the pictures out a little so we have more variety?

You have one author, a carry-over from the old OTHER WORLDS, whom you should use more often. His line of whimsy makes for entertaining, humorous reading. I mean, of course, T. P. Caravan. When will you give us another of his delightful stories. By the way, that name, T. P. Caravan, has always struck me as rather funny for the type of story. Rather metaphorical, or should I say, rather of a simile.

One other complaint: You stated you were going to improve on *Universe* after taking over from Bell Publishing Co. You have, except for one thing (other than the covers). One of the big drawing cards in the first two issues were the two-tone illustrations. These were a step forward in giving new life to science fiction. Only two other mags made use of this *Science Fiction Plus* — defunct, and *Fantastic*—before it was combined with *Fantastic Adventures*. I like these illustrations, but they no longer exist. Was the cost prohibitive?

Keep improving the stories, though, and I can forgo the color inside. But for heavens sakes get rid of that ghastly type of cover.

Guy E. Terwilleger
1412 Albright Street
Boise, Idaho

So you don't like the new type cover? Well, we've gotten many and varied reactions to it—and we're printing samples of them.

For you readers who don't like it, we'll try to keep you happy by giving you the type of stories and interior illustrations you ask for. For instance, how do you like the quick service on your request for Lawrence? I could say that I got these drawings especially in answer to your letter, Guy, but let's be honest— there were three contributing factors: 1) I'm very partial to Lawrence illustrations, 2) judging from the letters we get, a lot of readers want Lawrence, and 3) while going through the lead story to choose scenes for illustration, I read the scene depicted on page 9 and immediately decided that it was made to order for Lawrence. Keep with us, Guy, and I think

you'll like the mag even if you don't like the covers. —Bea

Dear Bea,

I'd like to comment on *Universe.*

When I saw the first issue on the stands early last year I felt that here was a magazine that, out of all the others that had appeared around that time, was going to stick it out, and become something really tops. When Rap bought it I was sure that I was right.

But after the September Issue I'm not so sure anymore. I've been watching *Imagination* slowly going to the dogs, and now it seems that *Universe* is bound for the same fate. I wish that more editors would realize that the Bergy cover died with Bergy, and the space opera is just as dead. Please don't ruin the fine start that you've already made with *Universe* by trying to revive either of them.

I want Universe to be a magazine I can carry around with me and be proud of, not one that I have to hide in my room and read after everyone else is asleep.

In it's present condition *Universe* is doing more to hurt SF than to help it, and if it weren't for what you call an "atmosphere of friendliness" surrounding your magazine, the only thing that would keep me reading it would be my subscription.

I hope that my letter isn't the only one of this type that you have received. If it is, please put it in the round file and forget about me (I may be nuts. But if it isn't, please heed the urging of the few fans writing to you in earnest, not just to get their names in print, and make some sudden changes.

David K. Doren
1191 Burns Ave.
St. Paul 6, Minn.

Wow, Dave, you are bitter! Do you, maybe, like the new covers better? As for space opera being dead—huh-uh! It isn't, and I don't think it ever will be; at least, I hope it won't. It may not be World-Shaking, Significant Literature, but it's entertainment— and good entertaiment. As for filing your letter in the circular file just because it's not full of bonbons and bouquets —we've never yet tossed out a letter for that reason unless it was unprintable or from an obviously unreasonable and hopelessly prejudiced fanatic writing about his pet hate. This has happened twice, in my experience. Other than that, letters do not see print because of space limitations, or because they're not of general interest. As for you, I'll print this and stay friendly enemies with you until the day one of our issues causes you to write me a letter I don't have to handle with asbestos gloves. — Bea

Dear Ray and Bea:

I feel like a louse! That's right—a louse! Why? Because of that sour letter I wrote to you several months ago. Since then I've had reason to change my mind. Why, again? Well, I've two reasons: 1) The September issue and 2) the November issue. I bought two extra copies of the latter, Honest Ray, that new cover layout is terriff with me! The cover was swell! The stories was swell! The Editorials was swell! In short, everything was real George!

Just to show ya this ain't jus' shootin' da breeze, I'm enclosing a check for six bucks for subscriptions to Fate and Mystic. So thar, see what you can do with that!

John D. Walston
1044 88th N. E.
Bellevue, Washington

And John, them last two letters was swell! You mean the last two issues of Universe (From now on we're calling it OTHER WORLDS. Rap says to keep mentioning this fact all through this issue so you'll know which magazine to buy next issue.) were so good that you're subscribing to Fate and Mystic? You are, I trust, already a subscriber to Universe (next issue, OTHER WORLDS; *see, Rap, I won't let 'em forget.)? And bless you for those kind words about the new cover format. The two letters printed ahead of yours had me feeling kind of blue. So I think you, your letters and your subscriptions was swell! — Bea*

And along the same lines:

Dear Editors:

When OTHER WORLDS was stopped, I thought you people made a mistake. I still do. Universe is all right, but what is it? OW, under a different cover, that's what. It still has that Something most magazines lack. A personality which is different . Maybe it's the type or illos or stories, but just maybe it's the editors.

Now that fandom has outgrown the puppy stage, it is ready to receive the old masters back. Look at all the new ones which appeared and lasted only a few issues. Only the "firsts" are here now.

OTHER WORLDS is here too, in a sense, underneath it all. Now she is more mature as scarred in a battle. It *was* a battle in a way—to stay in there. As a wounded vetern OW has had plastic surgery, but is she as good as the original? I myself feel it is not. So, I ask that you revive OW as issue No. 32. You might as well. You're publishing it anyway, and why not under the title we are all know.

Jim Winters
3316 S. Handley
Wichita, Kansas

You said it! we agree; we comply; see the May issue of OTHER WORLDDS. —Bea

(*Concluded from page 2*)

swap two for one. Also want many other mags to swap at the usual one for one. Do you have any first ish mags (seven comics) of pre '44 period? Send me list. Also want stamps and Jazz records. Bill Deppe, Pollocksville, N. Car. . . . *Want Operation Fantast Handbook, K. F. Slater; 1 to 33 Madge; fellow fan (16) for correspondence. William E. Gahwyler, 550 Stuyvesant Ave., Rutherford, N. J.* . . . . Wanted: Large-size Prince Valiant strips, also the Prince Valiant books. Psychotic 3 to 10. Mad No. 5. Stf Advertiser, Stf News letter, Shadow mag, book, edition of "The Living Shadow," and all ishs of "The Shadow Annual," early copies of Planet Comics, FA 10 to 40, SSS 11 to 41, ishs of Captain Future. Hank Moskowitz, Three Bridges, N. J. . . *Have a Kelsey press, supply of 6 point type, ink—will sell to best offer. Want some Galaxy Novels, SS, TWO, F& SF, aSF, or PB's in trade for 60-70 pulps in good cond. Trade by lot or singles, but prefer lot. Send list of what you have and what you need. Sam Johnson, 1517 Penny Dr. Edgewood, Elizabeth City, N. Car* . . . For sale: "Index On The Weird and Fantastica In Magazines," 162 pages, 8½ x 11, mimeographed. $2.00. Owners say it's well worth the price. Want information for a supplement to "The Checklist of Fantastic Literature." Have over 3000 titles now, but more are wanted. Same data as original book. Bradford M. Day, 127-01 116 Ave., S. Ozone Park 20, N. Y.

ATOMIC AGE

(*Concluded from page 115*)

Author's note: There were two reasons for writing what you have just read. One of them is the cover of this magazine, which bears a photographic reproduction of one of Virgil Finlay's paintings; and for some reason readers seem to think there ought to be a cover story to go with a cover, a condition which seems to be nothing more than a tradition, often very annoying to editors. The other is to utilize just one more way of saying it's getting hot in here—will somebody please open the window? Or no, maybe you'd better not—it's getting dangerous even to breathe. It seems you can't talk sense these days, so maybe nonsense will work? Something's gotta work! Seriously—I'm serious. Don't you think it's time we checked into this atmospheric radiation level business?

By the way, did you read this because of the title? Well, if you did, you're just a moron, and I'll bet you wear red underwear!—*Rap.*

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